

THE CONTRIBUTION OF JOHN NEVILLE FIGGIS (1866-1919)
TO THE RELIGIOUS THOUGHT OF HIS PERIOD

by

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TO MY FATHER

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CHAPTER I

FIGGIS AS A MAN

Now more than ever is it needful to have books--the work of learned men, as in the case of Newman,--which shall get free from all dullness and use every possible means of persuasion, wit, sarcasm, eloquence, colour, good writing. Why should it be supposed that a pompous condescending style is likely to convert people.... Dullness has not yet been raised to the rank of a theological virtue, though it seems too often to be the chief virtue of theologians.¹

Thus John Neville Figgis, C. R., concluded an article on "John Henry Newman" for The English Church Review in 1912, an article written in the midst of the years of his greatest literary productivity. As liberal excerpts from his writings in the pages that follow will show, the style which he said typified Newman's work became the style of his own work. But to fully appreciate these writings as meeting a need "to have books--the work of learned men....which shall get free from all dullness and use every possible means of persuasion,....." the student must come to know the life of the man who held the pen, a life as rich in "colour" as his writings when at their usual best and as irregular at times as his illegible script at its normal worst.

There was nothing dull about the life which began at Brighton on October 2, 1866, and ended near Windsor on April 13, 1919. The events of the intervening fifty-three years make an interesting study, including as they did: an early life spent in the home of a father who was a Non-

1. Figgis, The Fellowship of the Mystery, "John Henry Newman," p. 262.
Note: Figgis's writings referred to in this chapter will be annotated in full in the chapters which follow the biographical chapter.

conformist minister; a sixteen year (1885-1902) young adult life of intimate association, excluding brief interruptions, with Cambridge as a brilliant student and lecturer, years which saw a shift in academic interests and excellence from mathematics to history, a shift in convictions regarding spiritual things from a college-bred agnosticism to a decision to seek orders in the Church of England, years of association at various stages with Creighton, Maitland, and Acton, who impressed him with their common passion for freedom and each of whom made his own strong impression as an individual, and years of mounting reputation as a competent historian of political thought; five years (1902-1907) as rector of a small country parish, ~~in~~ Marnhull, Dorset, where he had his first real taste of intimacy as a pastor with common people and where his experience deepened his religious insight beyond anything he had heretofore known; and twelve years (1907-1919) lived as a probationer and then a professed member of a religious order in the English Church, the Community of the Resurrection at Mirfield. It was by repeated and frequent sojourns from this retreat to lecture at various centers of learning in Great Britain and the United States and to preach in various pulpits in London and other parts of England that Figgis, who had won his reputation as a historian of political thought, earned an even more distinguished reputation as one who wrote and spoke with a passion for Christ and His Church in compelling words for a new Twentieth Century audience to hear, words of "wit, sarcasm, eloquence, colour," words which were as lacking in that dullness which "seems too often to be the chief virtue of theologians" as was the life of the man from whose pen and lips they came.

J. B. Figgis, who was born in Dublin, 1837, had been minister of the Countess of Huntingdon's Church, North Street, Brighton, some six years when the first of his three sons, John Neville Figgis, was born in 1866. This church, which was the centre of J. B. Figgis's entire ministry until his retirement in 1915, was part of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion, the name given to the group of churches and chapels begun by Selina, Countess of Huntingdon (1707-1791), under the strong influence and Calvinistic bias of Whitfield, a movement having many affinities in worship with the Established Church while being essentially congregational in polity. Figgis was a leading figure in the Connexion and enjoyed a reputation as an outstanding preacher. Gladstone often attended both his morning and evening services.

Neville Figgis's mother, whose family name was Chaffey and who came from Winsham in the county of Somerset, married J. B. Figgis and came to live with him at 132 Clifton Road during his first year at Brighton. She was a devout woman, a good housekeeper, and a very active participant in the life of the church the first years of her married life. But with the birth of their third son, Samuel Bradley Figgis, who became a prominent physician, she entered a long period of declining mental health. This tragedy was quickly followed by another when the second son, William Chaffey, died at the age of eight years. The vacancy in the home created by Mrs. Figgis's long illness was filled for many years by Miss Figgis, the eldest sister of J. B. Figgis, and then by Miss Chaffey, the eldest sister of Mrs. Figgis. "In her the two children found the care and council which the

mother, owing to her illness, was unable to give."¹ Walter Howard Frere, Superior of the Community of the Resurrection, when Figgis made his profession, writes: "To the deep religious influence of his home, Neville Figgis owed much throughout his life."² Recalling a normal boyhood, Figgis writes

I remember when I was a child, for some quarrel with my brother he had been forbidden to go that night to see some fireworks, our annual joy. Proudly I said, though still allowed, "I shall stay with him." That sounded very fine at 6, but at 8 o'clock, it seemed dull and at 8:30 it looked simply silly, and at 8:45-- I need not detail the rest. I think that when my father said, "So you went after all," there was expressed in it the spirit of what our dear Lord must feel very often when He has to say to His friends, "Could ye not watch with Me one hour?"³

And certainly it was with his own home much in mind that he wrote:

The youth longs to be up and doing; he is for casting off all fetters. He is not going to do things just because his elders do them; rather he will do the contrary. He will improve upon the past. No dead hand of dry tradition shall interfere with him. He will seek fresh woods, will change a hemisphere to win an El Dorado; in reality rather that he may get away and be free, than for anything he will get out of it.

And yet, and yet, all the while he has within him this other desire. Some image of a quiet home, some spot where he can rest in spirit, where the little pieties of the soul can gather, even amid all his wanderings, something that draws him, not because it is new, but because it is old, about which there clings that immemorial pathos that belongs to whatever has touched life for long. It may be thoughts of his parents, or the love of some sister or younger brother whom perhaps he did not treat as well as he might when they played together; or perhaps of the school where he was bred, or those years to be remembered but not repeated at college; or the church to which he went reluctant, or the cadence of an ancient hymn; or even it may be the scents of

1. J. Westbury-Jones, M. A., Jesus College, Oxford, Minister of Lady Huntingdon's Church, London, Figgis of Brighton, A Memoir of a Modern Saint, (London, Marshall Brothers, Ltd., 1917), p. 232.

2. Dictionary of National Biography, 1912-1921, ed. by H. W. C. Davis and S. R. Weaver (Oxford).

3. Figgis, Antichrist, pp. 85-86.

some old garden.¹

In thinking for himself of "those years to be remembered but not repeated at college," Figgis's thoughts travelled back to his years as a day student at Brighton College (Lent term 1881-Summer term 1885), where he came after attending a private school in Montpelier Crescent. At Brighton Figgis cut a rather odd figure because of his reluctance to associate with his fellows, his unusually intense intellectual interests, and his complete withdrawal from all athletic activity. The fact is that Figgis never really mastered the physical techniques of life. The year before his death he related this ineptitude to his having absented himself from things athletic during his school days:

...I believe that the Public Schools are among the best things we have in England. It is a pity they do not stimulate more boys to intellectual interest. But for myself, having been allowed at school to be hopelessly unathletic and living forever after in penitence for this sin of omission, I am the least disposed to question the value of athletics....²

Any nostalgic references to college days refers the more, however, to Figgis's years as a student at St. Catherine's College, Cambridge, where he took up his studies in the Fall term of 1885, coming as a mathematics scholar from Brighton with an open scholarship. R. R. Conway, a man with whom Figgis shared a house on Tennis Court Road for many years (1891-1893, 1895-1897), writes:

...without any conspicuous enthusiasm for the study, he was placed well up among the Senior Optimes. He then came up for a fourth

1. Ibid., pp. 87-88.

2. Martin Browne, A Dream of Youth--An Etonian's Reply to The Loom of Youth, preface by Figgis, (London, Longmans, Green and Co.), p. x.

year, read history, and obtained the solitary First class of his Tripos, bracketed with a Girtonian....¹

Conway offers the best existing general account of Figgis's earlier years at Cambridge, words which point not only to Figgis's excellence as a student but also to the breadth of his associations, in marked contrast to the insular life of the day boy at Brighton:

...he did know his work, and besides this he had the priceless gift of being interested in anything that was of interest to his friends. This cut both ways; people would come to him and talk to him about anything and everything; he forgot nothing that he heard and so became a perfect mine of general information, and this had much to do with his immense capacity as a teacher of his subject. To a great proportion of his contemporaries he was known, not so much for intellectual as for personal qualities; he had a genius for friendship and his vast circle embraced men of every stamp and every pursuit. Many of them had first met him professionally, but in his rooms you might meet Blues of varied distinction, Union orators, politicians, classics, a Senior Wrangler or two, representatives of every imaginable tripos, and a swarm of those who might be described as "unlabeled." As a host he was perfect; he never allowed the most timid freshman to feel out of it, he could talk on any subject under the sun, he loved good cheer and saw that his guests had it to.....²

E. V. Lucas's Reading, Writing and Remembering contains a reference to a meeting with young Figgis during the latter's fourth year at Cambridge which is indispensable to any effort to gain insight into the unusual characteristics and talents of "Figgis as a Man."

One recollection of those early Brighton days is concerned obliquely with Oscar Wilde and the odd manner in which I became acquainted with his writings. In January, 1889, I chanced to meet a youth, who later was to distinguish himself as a historian--John Neville Figgis, whose father was a minister of the Countess of

1. R. R. Conway, "J. N. Figgis," St. Catherine's Society Magazine, (September, 1937), p. 56.

2. Ibid., pp. 56-57.

Huntingdon Chapel in the town, and who, as the author of daring and satirical verses, displayed the brilliance that we associate with the rebellious sons of the clergy. After surprising me by taking orders and forswearing the world, he died--a loss to learning--in middle age, but not before he had acquired as much erudition, bulk, and untidiness as Dr. Johnson himself, whom he resembled, to my eyes, far more than Chesterton is supposed to do.But to return to Oscar Wilde, on the evening on which I met young Figgis, who was then about twenty, he had come fresh from reading in the Nineteenth Century Wilde's essay on "The Decay of the Art of Lying," and without a misplaced or omitted word, he repeated large portions of this to the company. The result of a single perusal. The stories of Macaulay's similar feats of memory I had until then thought to be exaggerations; but I can testify that Figgis had the same astonishing gift.¹

As indicated above, Figgis, after his third year at Cambridge, turned from the study of mathematics² to the study of history, a field in which he distinguished himself from the very beginning. Following a brief time out for travel and diversion after his fourth year for reasons of health, Figgis returned to St. Catherine's and proceeded to win numerous laurels in his recently chosen field in the form of the Lightfoot Scholarship in 1890, the Junior Whewell Scholarship in 1891, and the Prince Consort Prize in 1892, the same year in which he received his M. A. It is with regard to submitting his paper in competition for the Prince Consort Prize that Conway provides the following account:

The event of all others which is most deeply engraved on my memory deals with a certain Saturday night forty-six years ago. At midnight the dissertation for the Prince Consort Prize had to be in the hands of the Vice-Chancellor; Figgis was offering his views on the Theory of the Divine Right and had planned a treatise consisting of a preface and five chapters: at lunch that day he asked whether I would mind dinner at 6:30 instead of 7:00 as he wanted to write the last chapter! As I never

1. E. V. Lucas, Reading, Writing and Remembering--A Literary Record, (London, Methuen & Co., 1932), pp. 56-57.

2. In a sermon entitled, "The Problem of Pain," Figgis wrote: "I admit that to me the joy in mathematics is a little remote."

minded the nearer approach of a meal, I consented with pleasure; the preface and the first four chapters had gone to the typewriters and things seemed fairly normal. At about 6:45 a parcel arrived; they had typed the preface but regretted that they could not read a word of the rest. Figgis was in despair; more to keep him quiet than anything else I said, "Go to the college, find the two most intelligent people you can and bring them here; we will copy out your (epithet) book." He went and returned with two, one was A. B. Holman, the other, as far as I can remember, Hall. We got down to it; while the author developed Chapter V we drove through the rest. As I knew his little ways, I got through I and IV, the others managed II and III, where there was a page of Figgis's that might possibly be legible it was interpolated, and by 11:30 or thereabouts it was done! But still it had to be put together, a motto chosen, enclosed in a sealed envelope, and all the rest of it. Midnight approached; I seized the author, took hold of his arm, and ran (footnote: this is perhaps the only authentic instance in his career of such a mode of progression) him by all the short cuts to Christ's. Peile was the Vice that year; as the hour struck the parcel was handed to the porter. There were three sequels to this thriller:

(a) "Figgis on the Divine Right" was the only exercise to obtain favourable recognition

(b) The examiners expressed the opinion that the manner in which Mr. Figgis submitted his work left much to be desired

(c) The triumphant author and Medallist entertained his clerical staff at the best dinner the kitchens could provide: needless to say we each had a book.¹

Two men proved the inspiration that fired Figgis's initial zeal for history and for particular phases of history as they relate to political problems and man's political freedom. One of them was Frederick William Maitland, who in 1888 was appointed Downing Professor of the Laws of England at Cambridge. Speaking of Maitland as a historian and of his style as a writer of history, Figgis says:

His style was and is like that of no one else, compact of extraordinary Biblical and other archaisms, intensely individual, vivid and striking, packed with allusions, sparkling with humour, and suggesting even more than it stated--.... It was a style like the

1. Conway, op. cit., pp. 59-60.

portrait of Monna Lisa, which all the thoughts and experiences of the world seemed to have moulded, and it had, whether delivered or written, an extraordinary quality, almost unique among historians--that of reproducing the atmosphere of the time he was discussing. Perhaps it was best expressed once in the phrase of Mr. Andrew Lang, that he turned flashes of electric light on his subject.¹

The influence of a man like Maitland contributed much to Figgis's ability as a historian, and wherein the student came to share something of the master's talents, the following picture could be drawn:

...for many years we shared a house on Tennis Court Road; when I returned from a morning's labour I could see Figgis and his pupils hard at it, the teacher buried in a vast armchair suited to his Chestertonian build, waving a cigarette and with a ponderous "original authority" on his knees, the pupil, or pupils, writing at express speed and looking like shorthand reporters of a speech by Lloyd George or some similar celebrity. When they came to the study of their hectic scribbles they found, as they have told me themselves, that they had a perfect summary of the work in question.²

The other name associated with inspiring and directing Figgis at this stage of his development is that of Mandell Creighton, who became the first Dixie Professor of Ecclesiastical History the same year in which Figgis came up to Cambridge from Brighton. This ~~High~~ Anglican clergyman, who, in 1890, became the Bishop of Peterborough and later Bishop of London, did much to stimulate the study of history in a University in which it was not the fashion. Creighton as a historian and even more as a man made a deep impression upon Neville Figgis. In writing his tribute to him, Figgis says:

As a lecturer, and still more as private tutor, the main cachet

1. Figgis, Churches in the Modern State, "Three Cambridge Historians: Creighton, Maitland, and Acton," pp. 245-246.

2. Conway, op. cit., p. 56.

of Creighton's teaching was the constant stimulus he gave to thought and activity. What struck us most was the wide range of his interests, his sense of the absolute importance of knowledge, and, as I once heard him say, "the appalling levity" with which the members of the so-called educated classes deliver opinions on every conceivable topic. It would be truer to say that he tried to make men discipline themselves than that he endeavoured himself to discipline them. Alike in religion, politics, learning, he always respected and believed in the individual. His great object, indeed, was to make the individual believe in himself; not, of course, in the sense of being arrogant or self-conscious. No one could be severer to anything of that sort. But he tried to make his pupils see that there were tasks worthy of their attempting; that they ought not to be afraid of them, and that they must be makers of their own lives. One of the first lessons we learnt from him was the absurdity of worshipping "the idols of the market-place" and the iniquity of satisfying ourselves with plausible hypocrisies and conventional fallacies. No one exposed more unsparingly the superficial sentimentality which often mistakes itself for culture.¹

Of the three men (Creighton, Maitland, and Acton), Creighton was undoubtedly the greatest teacher of youth, and did much to save from being mere dilettanti the interested "literary" youths who abound at the Universities.²

And it was as Figgis began to perceive the intimate connection between Creighton's character and achievements and his Christian faith that he began to number himself as one among those "interested 'literary' youths who abound at the Universities," whom Creighton "did much to save from being mere dilettanti."

Never shall I forget the impression made on me as an undergraduate by being brought into touch with a great scholar who was above all things a humanist, but the very depth of whose humanism was due to his Christianity.³

Figgis referred to himself as having been an agnostic during these

1. Figgis, Churches in the Modern State, "Three Cambridge Historians: Creighton, Maitland, and Acton," pp. 231-232.

2. Ibid., p. 233.

3. Figgis, Hopes for English Religion, p. 133-4 (Quoted again in another context, infra., p. 209.

early years at Cambridge,¹ and one of his friends recalls his having said, "When I was an 'agger." But this college-bred abandonment of the faith in which he had been brought up could not long withstand the warmth of Creighton's Christianity as it informed his conduct, sparked his interest in young men, equipped him to see through sham, and provided the base of his great intellectual insight and achievement. So profound was Creighton's influence and the influence of certain events, so complete was the reversal of Figgis's agnostic position, that he was not content with the single step of confirmation in the English Church and the prospect of living the Christian life as a layman. In 1894 he left the scene of his much activity as a history scholar, coach, and lecturer for Wells Theological College. He spent only a short time there and later in the same year was ordained a deacon at Peterborough by his much-loved teacher. He then worked for the best part of a year as Assistant Curate at Kettering,² after which he was ordained a Priest in 1895, again by Creighton at Peterborough, only to return to the academic atmosphere of Cambridge in the Fall of the same year.

For all of the influence of Creighton's life and thought upon Figgis's religious life, it was the death of another man that immediately precipitated his decision to seek orders. Figgis once said that ".....a

1. Vide, Figgis, The Fellowship of the Mystery, "John Henry Newman," p. 224.

2. The story is told that shortly after he went to Kettering, a lady met the Vicar on the street and said, "I have just met the new Curate. He is asleep in my drawing room. He came in to make a call and while there fell asleep. I had to go out, so I thought I had best leave him there."

personal experience is better than a volume of argument,"¹ and it was the sudden death in 1893 of a promising young Cambridge friend of great personal charm, Edward Moule, a Trinity man and an I. C. S. Cadet, whose passing Figgis felt deeply, that transformed a leaning into an immediate resolve to leave Cambridge for theological training. This experience of personal loss always remained a vivid memory and a continuing factor in Figgis's religious expression, as evidenced in various portions of his writings:

The partial, relatively superficial, character of intellectual processes is revealed in a flash at the crises of life. To one who is straining eyes through the gates of death for his friend who has passed beyond them, how unreal seem all studious delights! What a futile mockery in the face of fact are all men's speculative projections of reality. We may dwell at other times in an abstract world and make ourselves happy with conceptions. But life crashes in with "its wonder, its beauty, and its terror"--our house of cards trembles; and we are kicked as it were from the rational to the real, from the surface to the depths.²

Just as the supreme argument for immortality is the spectacle of some strong and noble character, dying in early life--for we feel that all cannot be over with it--so against the sight of nature and all her cruelties, what is there to be said except that human hearts will not acquiesce in a world whose sole meaning is that it has none? This is the final ground of all religious belief.....³

It is all but impossible to credit that some great character cut off in the height of power, or some youth noble and heroic killed in fight, has gone out into the dark for ever. If the world be not meaningless, we must think of them as alive. That is the real argument for an eternal world which shall ratify all that is noble in this:.....⁴

Figgis, in deciding to seek ordination in the English Church, re-

1. Figgis, The Gospel and Human Needs, p. x.

2. Ibid., p. 39.

3. Figgis, Civilisation at the Cross Roads, pp. 218-219.

4. Figgis, Hopes for English Religion, p. 144.

moved the possibility of his affiliating himself with his father's church, the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion, a step which probably never presented itself as a real alternative. After Neville's decision to enter the Established Church, J. B. Figgis wrote:

Need I say what a joy it was to me? There was just a tinge of regret in the joy that he did not adopt my churchmanship. But he greatly cheered me in this, by saying so filially, "I am sorry that I cannot come and help you."¹

The son came to enjoy a renewed respect for that for which his father stood and regarded his own and the Church of England's views as a development of the implications of Evangelical piety.

The writer would not knowingly, in either this or any other book, speak in any terms but those of affectionate reverence of that Evangelical piety which is to him hallowed by every sacred memory. This need not mean but that we ought to fill out the system by developing its implications and by bringing it into closer relation with the sacramental and institutional sides of religion.²

The question is raised as to just how far Figgis digressed during his college days from his boyhood faith before seeking first confirmation, then ordination in the English Church. M. G. Tucker, in his excellent biographical chapter of his little book, John Neville Figgis, suggests that the agnosticism to which Figgis avowedly subscribed for a time "meant a distrust of the intellect as an instrument for grasping the final meaning of life and of purely logical approaches to religion."³

It is the opinion of this writer that agnosticism for Neville Figgis meant a much more drastic departure from faith than Tucker's words

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1. Westbury-Jones, op. cit., p. 238.
 2. Figgis, The Fellowship of the Mystery, p. ix.
 3. Maurice G. Tucker, John Neville Figgis, A Study, (London, S. P. C. K., 1950), p. 6.

would imply. Nothing less than a complete divorce in his allegiance from anything even resembling the Christian faith suffices to explain words written in retrospect years later:

It is amazing how often we leave out of account the obvious fact that in our age, just as in Judaea nineteen hundred years back, there are very many people who are hostile to Christ because they dislike him. They despise His ideal of gentleness. They hate His ethics of love and self-denial; and they have no sense of sin, from which the Cross can deliver them, and neither belief nor interest in any way of life which is mainly dependent on the reality of the Otherworld. All of us know many people like this. Most of us have passed through phases in which it represented our own view.¹

R. R. Conway, to whom, as has already been seen, the student is indebted for so much valuable and intimate information about Figgis, says:

....there was no violent change in his spiritual outlook but rather a steady development.²

But in concluding a letter to this writer, he also says:

He (Figgis) was a many-sided man with a vast circle of friends and also quite unrivaled in the art of suiting his conversation to his company, so I never had any theological discussions with him.

Figgis's whole digression into agnosticism and away from the faith in which he was nurtured was another example of the not uncommon incident of a young intellectual turning against the expression of his childhood faith as inadequate to his intellectual categories. He must have had his initial revolt and his subsequent return to faith, although with a difference, in mind when he said in a sermon entitled, "The Ideal of a University Life":

However, this boisterous effort to deny our parentage is little

1. Figgis, Love of God, p. 58.

2. Conway, op. cit., p. 58.

more than the naughtiness of a boy in his teens who votes his family a mistake: and we know these rude ways will pass as he grows to the age when he can at once comprehend his ancestry and yet go beyond it.¹

Figgis returned to Cambridge in 1895 as Curate of Great Saint Mary's under another well-known historian, Dr. Cunningham, whom Figgis admired and at whose invitation he came. The record of the services held at Great Saint Mary's indicates that Figgis took a very active part in the life and worship of that University Church during the time of his responsibility there, which extended from October 1895 to February 1898. From 1898 to 1900 Figgis served as Chaplain at Pembroke College, and from 1899 to 1901 he performed a similar service for his own College. Over this entire six-year period, he was occupied as a lecturer at Saint Catherine's;² from 1897 to 1899 he also served as editor of the "Cambridge Review," and from 1900-1901 he was Birbeck Lecturer at Trinity College.

It was coincidental with Figgis's return to Cambridge in an official capacity that Sir John Edward ^{by then Lord} Dalberg Acton was appointed to the Chair of Regius Professor of Modern History at Cambridge. Acton was the third of the three Cambridge professors who had such a determining influence upon Figgis's life and thought. Figgis's description of Acton as a lecturer also suffices to describe the nature of the strong impression made upon him by this liberal member of the Roman communion.

No one could listen to him without being convinced of the tremendous issues which lie in political choice, or of the absolute dif-

1. Figgis, Hopes for English Religion, p. 191.

2. He was not a "don" in the strict sense of the word in that he was never appointed a fellow by his college, although he was later made an Honorary fellow.

ference between right and wrong doing. It was this burning conviction of the eternal distinction between good and bad, and the immeasurable gulf that divides expediency from justice, that gave to his lectures, his writings, and his life their peculiar significance. His whole life was, in fact, a protest against the principles of Machiavelli--that is, of purely utilitarian morals, whether in Church or State.¹

With the years of Figgis's second extended period of work at Cambridge in mind, R. R. Conway writes in a letter:

He then seemed to have settled in permanently, did much work in history and soon collected a large group of undergraduates who were ripe for theology: his Sunday evening gatherings in St. Catherine's were great occasions, proceedings being varied by a supper.

No major period in Figgis's adult life was without some marked element of spiritual crisis and upheaval. The years of his many-sided activity in Cambridge from 1895-1901 were no exception. The thing that gives an air of life, relevance, and intimacy to so much of Figgis's religious writings is the fact that he is speaking, hardly without exception, from the depths of his own experience. His own words, therefore, give the best account of what he went through during the period under consideration. In the middle of his first address in the University Church, as Hulsean Lecturer for 1908-1909, he looked down from the pulpit, which had been moved to the center of the nave, upon his attentive, black-gowned audience and said, referring without question to his years among them after he had been ordained:

And if for this faith I stand to-day, I ask you to believe that it is not to make vain show, or to shatter in argument a disdained opponent. To others faith is the bright serenity of un-

1. Figgis, Churches in the Modern State, "Three Cambridge Historians: Creighton, Maitland, and Acton," p. 259.

clouded vision; to me it is the angel of an agony, the boon of daily and hourly conflict. In these years as God's priest I have felt the pressure of crowding doubts, and learned in bitterness that to give up agnostic views may yet leave one far from the Kingdom of God--farther, save by His grace, than ever before.¹

Writing years later of the "new Baal" of non-miraculous Christianity and of the dangers to faith inherent in treating as irrelevant individual miraculous elements in the Christ narrative, he said, pointing back to the period of his own allegiance to the new cult:

Slowly almost everything crumbled. Faith in the sacramental presence was not so much denied as practically forgotten. Harder and harder of credit became the great Christian doctrines--a dominant intellectualism seemed to cut away everything, not by argument, but by detaching faith from all living interest. Nothing indeed seemed to remain, except an unreasoning resolve to move the mind on. All meaning in life seemed to be vanishing; religion tended to become mere humanitarianism, for it is surely worth while to lighten people's lot, and to hang on to one's work, until the contrary is clear. All this is now expressed in a far more clear-cut fashion than it was lived; it is of tendencies, surmises, presuppositions rather than of dogmatic statements that I speak. Yet all seemed to follow by a development, imperceptible but inevitable, living rather than logical from breathing that atmosphere, to which these apparently minor beliefs were akin.

Slowly change came. Penitence became real. After long years of struggle, pardon was sought in the sacrament of peace. Freedom, never given up as a belief, was seen to involve far more than had been thought. That notion of development which made miracles impossible was seen to be mechanical; the immanent philosophy was seen to be, if pushed to the extreme, a Pantheism identifying God and the world. So the glorious liberty of the children of God seemed given; and all the world grew younger day by day, as it does still. And may God never take from me, as I deserve, that grace so richly granted.²

1. Figgis, The Gospel and Human Needs, p. 15.

2. Figgis, The Fellowship of the Mystery, "Modernism Versus Modernity," pp. 294-295.

But to speak of the change that came is to speak of what took place, not in Cambridge, but in Marnhull, in the County of Dorset. It was in 1902 that Figgis, following a nervous breakdown, left Cambridge to become Rector of Marnhull, a country living in the gift of his College.

We are in Hardy country here, for close to the church stands a thatched wavy-roofed Inn, the "~~Pure~~ Drop" of Tess of the D'Urbervilles; the club-walking field is nearby, and down a little green lane stands the cob-walled thatched cottage that was the home of poor, ill-fated Tess.¹

Marnhull is a large and scattered village with some thirty miles of roads within its parish. Figgis was often to be seen walking these roads, making some abortive effort to cover them on a bicycle, or cutting across the fields for some poor parishioner's house. It made no difference whether or not a person belonged to his church, for he looked upon all of the people as belonging to his parish. Not infrequently he attended and acted as chairman at various functions in the village's Methodist Chapel. Here in Marnhull Figgis was struck with the simple piety of the people, and much of his previous training in a strongly Evangelical home came to the fore in this homely setting. He was especially attentive to his people in their times of difficulty and illness, and it is said that for a period he took care of one man who was suffering with small pox. He was recalling the value of his pastoral work in Marnhull when he wrote:

Lately some one has been saying that visiting is an impertinence. That is not my experience as a parish priest. Personal work, it is said, we must set aside in favour of boards and committees. Doubtless personal work has its dangers. If it had not, it would not be much good. But at least it is the method of our Lord. The

1. Dorset Year Book 1948-1949, p. 150.

other is not. It has always been the method of those who in the common opinion have been most like our Lord, a S. Francis, a Fenelon, a Father Stanton. With the example of Jesus' ministry before him, it is little short of amazing that any Christian teacher should deprecate personal individual work, and cry up system.¹

The Confirmation Roll at Marnhull numbered sixty-one boys and girls in 1904 and sixty-three children in 1907. This experience in catechising the young was very valuable to Figgis and played an important part in the return which his years at Marnhull saw from some form of philosophic idealism to something resembling orthodox Christianity, from a kind of personal mysticism to an allegiance to the Christ who invaded and who continues to invade history.

Teaching children in the country taught me much: I learnt then how impossible it is to identify Christianity with a mere philosophic idealism; and the facts of the Gospel and its dogmas (provided simple words are used) are quite natural to the young. Dogma, it is said, should not be taught to children; but it would be truer to say that it is the only thing you can teach them.²

Figgis's years at Marnhull, for all of his attention to his parish, were years of considerable intellectual activity. There he wrote his important article for the third volume of the Cambridge Modern History, revamped his Birbeck Lectures, From Gerson to Grotius, and prepared them for publication, worked with R. V. Lawrence on the extensive task of editing Acton's writings, wrote his little volume, Christianity and History, and withal, had time to coach various students who came to study under him from time to time, and to give special lectures in Marnhull, Pakestone, Gittingham, and Dorchester, the proceeds from which he contributed to the

1. Figgis, Some Defects in English Religion, p. 89.

2. Figgis, The Fellowship of the Mystery, pp. 167-168.

fund for the repair of the church tower.

Marnhull's fine early-English church with its Norman features was often the recipient of gifts purchased from Figgis's own pocket, including several pairs of candlesticks, alms bags, an altar cross, a brass lecturn, and a small oak prayer desk for Hussey Chapel.¹

In spite of the fact that Figgis had learned much and matured greatly at Marnhull, his association there was not an altogether happy one. Among other things, he was sensitive to the feeling that some of his people did not approve of his being unmarried.²

Figgis's parishioners were both charming and dull--charming as offering a man who had lived too much of his life in an academic world the friendship of refreshingly simple people, tiresome or dull for being completely ignorant of the things which this brilliant mind and conversationalist knew best. The "Vestry Meeting Records" of the Marnhull church for April 4, 1907, suggest something of the charm and the lack of an innate

1. Figgis was famous for his generosity, but he was not always as discreet in his giving as in his gifts to the church. He once brought toy soldiers home from Europe for the gardener's daughter; and on a similar occasion he purchased a gift for Conway's child, for whom he had stood up as godfather. The gift was a sharp, two-edged dagger with a point like a needle. Figgis described it as a "nice present for a little boy which I picked up at a village fair in Germany." To add to the incongruity of it all, Conway's child, like the gardener's, was a girl.

2. As far as it is known Figgis never seriously contemplated marriage. One gathers that he did not especially approve of matrimony for clerics: "Social complacency is the worst of all qualities in our Church. A quarter of our ineffectiveness comes from this irritating vice among the clergy, and a full half from it in their wives. I do not believe we shall ever get out of it until the marriage of priests becomes the exception instead of the rule." Figgis, Some Defects in English Religion, p. 47.

sense of propriety on the part of the people whom Figgis served these five years:

Mr. Kenard then said a few words regretting the loss the Parish was sustaining in the departure of the Rector. The Rector briefly replied and stated that he was only taking the step because he believed that it was a clear duty and because he believed at this moment the Church of England needed this kind of service. He had learned much in Marnhull, especially his own shortcomings. Mr. Alfred Drew, the sexton, then asked that fresh cord might be supplied for the bell rope: -- the meeting then adjourned.

The "clear duty" to which Figgis felt a call at this time was to the Religious Life, the life of a monk. It was not so much that he had grown tired of the church at Marnhull as his concern for what he believed to be civilization's progress down the road towards destruction, his alarm at man's worship of the things which cannot endure, his turning against the slackness of his own intellectual Liberalism, and his revulsion at his laxness as a person which provided an irresistible pull in the direction of the more austere, disciplined life of a Member of the Community of the Resurrection at Mirfield.

The Community of the Resurrection came into being in 1892, when its founder and first Superior, Charles Gore, and five other men made their profession in the Chapel of Pusey House at Oxford. After some moving about, all the members moved to a home in Mirfield, which became the Mother House of the Community. Walter Frere (afterwards Bishop of Truro) succeeded Gore as Superior in 1902.

Figgis joined the Community over the objections of his father, but through much correspondence on the subject, they came to an understanding. The father wrote to the son:

It was good of you to spend all this time for making things clear to me. Now we will say no more about these subjects which divide, but about the many and far greater subjects which unite us..... I think your idea of poverty beautiful and your self-sacrifice in embracing it wonderful.¹

Describing the incidents surrounding the arrival and the early impressions made by Figgis in Mirfield, a fellow member of the Community wrote at the time of Figgis's death:

Such power to learn and grow only comes with humility; and indeed under the little childlike and almost attractive vanity that played upon the surface, there was in him a deep and reverent humility. Coming to the Community as a marked character, forceful, explosive, eccentric, but eminently human and lovable, he set himself with amazing simplicity to learn the ways of life which he had come to try. The legend may or may not be true that he first appeared in a silk hat, but had it removed from him in the hall, and a biretta substituted by an eagle-eyed brother, who had observed his arrival from an upper window, and descended in shocked haste to save the situation. But in any case, it is a true parable of the spirit of the newcomer.²

Figgis did enter wholeheartedly into his new way of life, a way of life not intuitively attractive to a man who had a well-cultivated taste for the niceties and luxuries of life.³ He, like the others, rose at 6:15 and saw the first light of new day on winter mornings through the windows of the Community Church (not completed until well after his arrival), during Mattins and Prime.⁴ Figgis, like the others, helped to clean the sanc-

1. Westbury-Jones, op. cit., p. 235.

2. The Quarterly Chronicle of the Community of the Resurrection, (St. John Baptist Day, 1919), pp. 1-2.

3. He once said while conducting a retreat at Mirfield, a work which he often did, "The man who says he does not enjoy a good dinner is either a liar or a fool."

4. He sometimes resented the frequent interruptions of his studies caused by required attendance at the canonical hours, which, during week days, included: Mattins and Prime, 6-50; Holy Communion, 7-15; Terce, 9-0; Sext, 1-0; None, 4-30; Evensong, 7-0; Compline, 9-45.

tuary of the Community Church on Friday afternoons and was responsible for tending his own fire, which included carrying coals up the often-counted thirty-seven steps to his little room in the House of the Resurrection.

It was to this drafty retreat three flights up that probationers (later called novices) assigned to his care and students for the ministry from the adjoining College of the Resurrection would come four or five at a time to draw in close around a roaring fire and to learn much in an informal way from a man who was tremendously interested in encouraging every sincere interest, every sign of ability which his discerning eye could detect in young men.

Every alternate year Figgis gave a course in apologetics at the College. In his relations with the College the events of one evening are especially remembered by those who were there at the time.

No one who heard it will ever forget the lecture on "G. K. Chesterton." He brought down to the College a huge black leather bag, almost shapeless, and proceeded to extract from it probably every published work of Chesterton's. A large paper slip marked the place where a desired quotation was to be found. The arrangement of the books on his table was a fascinating prelude to the lecture. He was just going to begin when a second round of applause broke out. There he stood, his head on one side, stroking his hair with that palm of strange convexity, blushing slightly, and obviously pleased. He rejoiced in the favour of youth. And then the lecture, making it impossible for any self-respecting person who heard it, ever to pass a cheap or superficial criticism of Chesterton again. He made us want to read: he kindled the fire while he talked and at the end he broke every rule the library ever had, lending the books upon the spot without any account taken of the borrower or any pledge that they would be returned. It was one of his greatest nights at the College.¹

These years at the Community were years of great literary pro-

1. B. Horner, The Quarterly Chronicle of the Community of the Resurrection, (St. John Baptist Day, 1919), pp. 7-8.

ductivity. During this time Figgis wrote for no less than seven lecture-ships, ^{which} ~~which~~ writings [^] shall be the subject of much that is to be considered in the pages ahead, and which ^{were delivered as lectures} ~~lectureships he delivered~~ in such centres as Cambridge, Oxford, and Gloucester (to the clergy), and in the United States, at Harvard, General Theological Seminary in New York, and Lake Forest College in Illinois. While at the Community he also wrote many articles and reviews for the "Guardian," "English Historical Review," and other religious and historical journals. He also wrote and delivered many sermons while at Mirfield. He was not an uncommon figure in various London pulpits and in churches throughout the country. A number of cloth and paper-bound collections of his sermons indicate the considerable extent of his preaching activity. Longmans, Green and Co. was always ready to print his sermons. They would take them down as he preached them, give him a copy to check, and then, with his approval, would proceed to print them. It was said of his preaching ability in the "Guardian" following his death:

Dr. Figgis was an attractive preacher; his graceful style, his gift of epigram, his devotion, combined with his remarkable intellectual power would fill the University Churches at Oxford and Cambridge when he preached in them.¹

Figgis's pulpit efforts have been described as falling somewhere between the formal theologizing of Gore and the arresting, lively method of Chesterton. His preaching manifested his wide acquaintance with modern literature. His sermons cannot be described as "exegetical" in the accepted sense of the term. They show the influence of Creighton, who is said to have advised that a sermon should be written on a subject and the

1. "John Neville Figgis, In Memoriam," Guardian, (April 24, 1919).

text chosen after its completion! Wherein Figgis' sermons were exegetical, they were exegetical of his own vital religious experience. He has been recognized as something of a master of the "teaching-sermon." He did not have a commanding voice but was able to get his message across and to hold his audience. He struck something of a comic pose in the pulpit with his finger to his head, pincer glasses at an angle, reading from his notes, throwing out flashes of wit and sober instruction.

Figgis had been too long at Cambridge ever to lose touch with its life. In 1906 he came up from Marnhull to act as a Lightfoot Scholarship Examiner, and in 1909 he came down from Mirfield and examined for the Historical Tripos. As already noted, he was Hulsean Lecturer at Cambridge for 1908-1909, and by his performance in delivering these lectures it is safe to say that he won his recognition as an important religious figure. Also in 1908, he was awarded his Litt. D., and in 1909, he was made an Honorary Fellow by Saint Catherine's College.¹ Figgis was much sought after during his Mirfield days by the Cambridge Church Society to preach for Sunday evening services at Great Saint Mary's. Still another side of his Cambridge activities in these later years was his work with the Oratory of the Good Shepherd, consisting of a group of young Cambridge men who observed a rule of life while carrying on their regular activities. During vacation the men would come to live together and Figgis would stay with them. He was their first Director, and during these vacation periods he

1. The only degree Figgis had, insofar as the records show, which he did not receive from Cambridge was the D.D. degree which the University of Glasgow conferred on him in 1913.

guided their life together.

The Community of the Resurrection's most colourful and perhaps most widely known figure would return from his many scenes of activity to describe to his fellows with a childlike delight the brilliant colours of the hoods in the academic processions attending the receiving of his most recent degree, or if he had prepared a lecture for some learned society, he was always ready to repeat it to a small audience in the Common Room of the Community House, and that "with all the keenness with which it had been delivered elsewhere." Likewise, if he was to preach in the Community Church or in the Quarry,¹ he took as much pains with the sermon as if it had been for a University congregation."²

One might think that these rich years as a member of the Community and as a much read and much sought after spokesman of sound religious thought might have been relatively free from that element of religious struggle which characterized so much of his experience heretofore. But they were not. While a member of the Community, he once said to Keble Talbot, "I pray that a year from now I shall still have my faith." Talbot later wrote of him:

One might say that like Newman, to whose spirit in many ways his was so akin, he had "a skin too few" to protect him from the smart which life could inflict on him. But his sensitiveness was the condition of his most piercing insight, and of the sympathy with which he could understand and help many whom a tougher nature could not touch.³

1. An actual stone quarry on the grounds of the Community used as an amphitheater for out-door services and functions.

2. Horner, *op. cit.*,

3. Talbot, "The Community 1892-1942," p. 16.

Following closely after an operation on his knee late in 1917, Figgis sailed in late January, 1918, for a number of preaching engagements in America. But on Sunday morning, June 27th, the Cunard liner, "Andania," on which he was one of some forty passengers, was struck by a torpedo off the Ulster Coast. Figgis spent some hours in an open boat, but was picked up and put to shore in an Antrim coast town by late the same afternoon. Before the day was out the message arrived at the Community, "Saved--probably home tomorrow--Neville." Saved, yes, but the incident was not without its ill effects. The torpedoing became something of an obsession with him and contributed significantly to the mental decline which had begun to set in even before he had started for America, for the last time. Figgis's brother placed him in Holloway Sanitorium, Virginia Water, where he showed some signs of improvement. The prospects of his imminent return to the Community seemed good, but then he collapsed quite suddenly on Palm Sunday, 1919. His body was brought to Mirfield and following suitable services was buried in the Community of the Resurrection cemetery. The words on the cross at the head of this first grave in the cemetery read:

John Neville Figgis
 Natus--October 2, 1866
 Professus--January 5, 1909
 Obitus--April 13, 1919

Words which Figgis wrote in 1916 provide the best commentary on what this unusual man of great talents, great devotion, and great capacity for friendship went through during the last stage of his life on earth:

It is only as we are willing to suffer the Cross as a means of

realizing our Love of God, that there is any hope for us to attain that union which is its end. We cannot have it at any cheaper rate. All who have knowledge of the mystical way tell us this, that the soul must pass through its dark night before she reaches her divine bridal; that rift of friends, help, comfort, even interior peace, she must realize herself in utter loneliness, and then and then only, goes on to her "Divine and ineffable union."¹

1. Figgis, Love of God, p. 32.

CHAPTER II

FIGGIS AS A POLITICAL THINKER"A Plea for the Group Person"

Before Figgis won recognition as a theologian, he was known as a historian of political thought. So it was that Raby, one of the first in more recent years to point to Figgis's contribution to religious thought, in recalling Figgis's presentation of The Gospel and Human Needs at Cambridge in the form of the Hulsean Lectures, began by saying:

The present writer is certainly not the only one of those undergraduates of 1908 on whom the sight of the author of The Divine Right of Kings and From Gerson to Grotius made a lasting impression.¹

The books mentioned are the two from the hand of the master turned monk which he had written while at Cambridge. They had earned him his reputation as a student and a discerning historian of political thought of a time which, in regard to its political significance, had often been misunderstood. It was the author of these two books whose religious views the Cambridge faculty and student body gathered in the University Church to hear.

But they came not only to hear a historian of political thought turned theologian. They came to hear a man who had a reputation as a political thinker in his own right, a man concerned with the political issues of his own day, and a man concerned with the history of political issues as

1. F. J. E. Raby, "John Neville Figgis, Prophet," Theology, XL, (1940), p. 325.

it had meaning for the present and for the future. In his introductory chapter of From Gerson to Grotius, Figgis makes it clear to the reader from the very outset that as a political historian he is not so much concerned with the past as such as with the past as it relates to modern problems.

He writes:

It is not to revive the corpse of past erudition that I have any desire, but rather to make more vivid the life of to-day, and to help us to envisage its problems with a more accurate perspective.¹

A comment by Lord Acton, one of Figgis's teachers, on the occasion of Acton's becoming Regius Professor of Modern History at Cambridge, reveals what was also Figgis's presupposition as he poured over ~~thousands of~~ original texts having to do mainly with the intricacies of political developments in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries:

The science of politics is the one science that is deposited by the stream of history, like grains of gold in the sand of a river; and the knowledge of the past, the record of truths revealed by experience, is eminently practical as an instrument of action and power that goes to the making of the future.²

1. J. N. Figgis, Studies of Political Thought from Gerson to Grotius, (2nd ed.; Cambridge, University Press, 1916), pp. 2-3.

2. J. E. Acton, Lectures on Modern History, ed. by J. N. Figgis and R. V. Lawrence (London, MacMillan, 1933), p. 28. The first edition is dated 1906. This work is the first in a series of four books representing the major writings of Acton as edited by Figgis and R. V. Lawrence. The others were: Historical Essays and Studies (London, MacMillan, 1908), The History of Freedom and Other Essays, (London, MacMillan, 1909), Lectures on the French Revolution (London, MacMillan, 1910). With the completion of these four major efforts to preserve the important works of a man whom Figgis described as "never producing any one work to which his admirers could point", this Letter-to-the-Editor by Acton's son appeared in "The Times" on November 8, 1910, on page 14: "Sir, The publication by Messrs. MacMillan of my father's collected writings in four volumes being now complete with the issues of his Lectures on the French Revolution, I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to the editors, Dr. Figgis, and Mr. R. V. Lawrence, for having undertaken and successfully concluded their editorial labours. Eight

Knowing that Figgis was something of a political theorist as well as a historian of political thought and realizing that the historian almost invariably leaves the imprint of his own thought upon the object of his historical inquiry, one is not surprised to find in all of Figgis's historical works abundant evidence of his own political views. His works bear out the truth of another statement made by Lord Acton, which appeared later in the same inaugural lecture:

Whatever a man's notions of these later (the last four) centuries are, the man himself will be. Under the name of history, they cover the articles of his philosophy, his religion, and his political creed.¹

The fact that Figgis's reputation as a historian of political thought with a mind of his own in matters political served as an introduction to Figgis the theologian, the fact that his political thought was in

years ago Mr. Lawrence generously offered to devote his leisure to this task of seeing the books through the press, and he was subsequently assisted by Dr. Figgis, who accepted the work of collaboration in the same unselfish spirit and became principal editor. The undertaking was no easy one; for besides the selection, from a large number of essays, of the most suitable for publication in a permanent form, and the task of bringing them up to date, it was necessary, in the case of the French Revolution lectures, to evolve a homogeneous text from two different manuscripts, portions of which were fragmentary only. The result achieved is the more remarkable if it be remembered that, from the nature of the case, the editors were only able to treat the work as a second charge on their literary time. I venture to hope that they will recognize in the tribute they have paid to the memory of the Professor whose favoured disciples they were, a partial reward, at any rate, for their labour of love. Your obedient servant, 'Acton'. British Legation, The Hague, November 4." Figgis and Lawrence also undertook to organize Acton's letters for publication. ~~They~~ appeared in 1917 under the title: Selections from the Correspondence of Acton (London, Longmans, Green and Co., 1917). The significant role that Figgis played in the editing of Acton's political works and correspondence constitutes a significant part of his contribution as a political thinker and a historian.

1. Ibid.

* The first and only

no small measure determining of his thought regarding the relations of church and state, that for which he is perhaps most widely known in religious as well as political circles, plus the fact that his political thought had a strong influence on a subject as essentially theological as the problem of authority within the church, makes it imperative that any estimate of The Contribution of John Neville Figgis to the Religious Thought of His Period dwell at some length upon the subject of "Figgis as a Political Thinker."

The object of this chapter will be to present an overall view of Figgis as a political thinker. It will begin with a basic statement of the thought which captured his imagination as a political thinker and to which he gave his allegiance from approximately the turn of the century until his death in 1919. This done, the progress of Figgis's political thought as set in the context of his political-historical studies will be traced. Following this, the final stage of his political theorizing will be studied in the context of his views about the relations of church and state. We shall see that his theories about the relations between the body ecclesiastical and the body politic are germane to much intelligent thinking on the subject in our own day. The last part of this chapter will deal with the bearing of Figgis's political thought upon his convictions regarding the problem of authority within the church, with special reference to the Church of England.

A sentence from A. R. Vidler's book dealing with the subject of church and state serves to introduce Figgis as a spokesman of that political thought "which captured his imagination as a political thinker and to which he gave his allegiance from approximately the turn of the century until his

death in 1919."

Gierke in Germany urged that recognition of the fact of "group personality" marks a great advance in sociological understanding; Maitland, and especially Figgis, have given the conception a certain vogue in England.¹

Gierke, a German jurist born in 1841, was an outstanding spokesman of the School of Historic Law which arose in Germany at the end of the eighteenth century and at the beginning of the nineteenth century as a strong manifestation in the field of law of the Romantic Movement. It numbered among its earlier proclaimants men like Herder, Justus, Moser, Hugo, Fichte, Niebuhr, Eichorn, and Savigny. The School taught that law is the historic product of the "people's mind":

Law, on this view is essentially "Volksrecht": it is the product, in each nation, of the national genius.²

In its negative emphasis, the School waged war against the foreign non-indigenous influences in Germany's national life and in particular against the reception of Roman Civil Law in Germany, which occurred about 1500 A.D., concurrently with the Renaissance and Reformation, and which had had, according to Gierke and his followers, a stranglehold on German legal thought for the three centuries which ensued. The movement strove to rediscover that which had been the genius of German life and legality before it had largely succumbed to the heavy hand of Roman law.

The major fault the School of Historic Law found with the influ-

1. A. R. Vidler, The Orb and the Cross, A Normative Study in the Relations of Church and State with Reference to Gladstone's Early Writings, (London, Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1945), pp. 56-57.

2. Otto Gierke, Natural Law and the Theory of Society, trans. by Ernest Barker (Cambridge, University Press, 1934), p. 1 (roman numeral).

ence of Roman law on German life was that it bore the stamp of the

...unassociative habit of the Latin...absolutistic in its conception of the State; individualistic in its treatment of the members of the State.¹

Absolutism and atomism as enshrined in Roman law tended to overlook and to militate against the liberty of associations within a given society, allowing them to exist only by the fiat of the state and permitting them to have no inherent rights of their own. The representatives of the new school of law asserted that more realistic Teutonic conceptions were waiting to be rediscovered in existing law which was seen to be an amalgam of Roman and Teutonic elements and more particularly in what had been the genius of German community life before the reception.

The genius of Teutonic social life was seen by Gierke and others to be:

...the "Genossenschaft," the company of brothers, linked by the right hand of fellowship, and knit together by a spirit of fraternity, who pursued the common interest of their group (whether based on profession, or occupation, or the simple foundation of voluntary association), and vindicated its common honour with a common ardour. The further you went back, the deeper seemed the idea and the closer the cohesion of this "Genossenschaft," or (as we may call it in a word which carries the same medieval flavour) this system of Fellowship. It runs back to early tribalism; it has the very savour and warm intimacy of the tribe...² The fellowship...did it not deserve a legal redognition of its true nature, which might be found by a return to the past and a study of old Teutonic law? To lift the disguising veil of imperial Rome, and to find, in an inner shrine, the figures of truth--old German truth, and comradeship, and attendant honour--this became a sacred duty of the new philosophy. In the cause of liberty of association, there must be a return to the past; ancient realities must again be revealed:

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1. Ibid., p. lix.
 2. Ibid., p. lviii.

the being, the mind, the person of the group--the local community, the fellowship--must be awakened from their long slumber.¹

Thus it was under the heading of "Genossenschaftsrecht" that the liberty of association was rediscovered and made explicit in Germany and presented as a guide to the future thinking of legal minds. The work was accomplished in large part by Gierke, whose influential four-volume work is entitled, Das Deutsche Genossenschaftsrecht.

Gierke championed Das Genossenschaftsrecht as recognizing the real personality of associations of people united in the pursuit of some common good. Associations of human beings are declared to be persons in much the same sense that an individual is a person. Gierke and his disciples disavow the Fiction theory, which contends that when a group acts as a single person and avails itself of the rights of a single person, it is only a "persona ficta," -- a fictitious person created by the state for the sake of legal convenience.

Behind the legal Group-person there is therefore a real Group-

1. Ibid., pp. lix-lx. It should be observed that Roman law had so long been a part of Germany's history that certain members of the Historical School, like Savigny, pled for its preservation in Germany's legal code as part of the national genius. As Maitland wrote: "...it is true that in the Historical School there were those who were historically minded Romanists who thought it their duty to take the 'Corpus Juris' very seriously and to withdraw concessions that had been made to German influence some will say to natural life and modern fact; others will say to slovenly thought and slipshod practice. The end result of the efforts of the Historical School as embodied in Germany's new civil code of 1896 indicated that both Roman and German influences remained, neither to the exclusion of the other; however, Gierke's efforts were all in the direction of turning the balance on the side of Germanism." O. Gierke, Political Theories of the Middle Ages, trans. by F. W. Maitland (5th ed.; Cambridge, The University Press, 1938), Introduction p. xiv.

being, just as there is a real individual human being behind the individual legal person. Legal group-personality is the shadow cast by real group-personality: it is the reflection of reality in the mirror of the law.¹

Maitland, the Cambridge historian and the translator of Gierke, presented to English minds the broad scope of Gierke's thought in his introduction to his translation of a chapter section of Das Deutsche Genossenschaftsrecht entitled, "Staats und Korporationslehre." Conscious that English law had also, in some measure at least, been influenced by the absolutism and atomism of Roman law, Maitland wrote:

However be it noted that even in England a certain amount of foreign theory was received and by far the most remarkable instance is the reception of that Italian theory of the corporation of which Dr. Gierke is the historian and which centres around the phrase "persona ficta."²

Maitland further indicates, however, that England, under the guise of trusts, had recognized in fact what she had not recognized in theory: the "Genossenschaftsrecht," the right of fellowship, the right of the association to act as a person.

For the last four centuries Englishmen have been able to say, "Allow us our Trusts, and the law and theory of incorporations may indeed be important, but it will not prevent us from joining and maintaining permanent groups of the most various kinds: groups that, behind a screen of trustees, will live happily enough, even from century to century, glorying in their unincorporatedness...If Pope Innocent and Roman forces guard the front stairs, we shall walk up the back."³

Thus indicating that Trusts are overworked, he says:

It seems possible that some new thoughts or some renovation of

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1. Barker, op. cit., p. lxvii.
 2. Maitland, op. cit., p. xiv.
 3. Ibid., p. xxix.

old thoughts about the personality of the organized group might show us straighter ways to desirable and even necessary ends.¹

This plea is much less impassioned than Figgis's plea for a more logical approach to group life; for while Maitland was more or less quietly confident that the swan song of the Concession theory had been played and that the Trusts would carry the burden until everyone realized it, Figgis saw the Fiction and Concession theories as the instruments of great injustice, requiring instant condemnation and the working out of a theory which would fit the facts of group life and be a guide to lawmakers.

To discover the basic affinity of Figgis's thought with that of Gierke and Maitland, the student might turn to any one of fifty references in Figgis's historical, as well as his articles and more popular works, which give expression to his political thought. One such quotation is found in that article about the Cambridge scholars who had a lasting impression on his life, "Three Cambridge Historians: Creighton, Maitland, and Acton," which he contributed to the "Guardian" in the year 1907. In the section in which he describes Maitland and confesses his indebtedness to him, he writes:

That book, the Deutsche Genossenschaftsrecht, he once declared to me to be the greatest book he had ever read; and it is possibly through Gierke's influence more than any other, that Maitland came to demolish--no weaker term can be used--the old conception of the position of corporate bodies in the State. That conception makes all clubs, associations, communities, religious, political, or economic, the mere creatures of the omniscient modern State (which inherits its claims from Imperial Rome), with no right to exist, except on concession, express or implied, and no powers of

1. Ibid., p. xxxv.

action beyond what the State (in theory) delegates to them. This theory (which if it does not depend on, at least is connected with the canonist doctrine of Innocent IV, that the corporation is a "persona ficta") it has been the work of the German school of "realists" to overthrow. Gierke, and men like him, looking back from Roman to Teutonic origins, and looking out into the facts of the world to-day, have seen the absurd chaos into which this theory would land us, and its utter falsity to life as actually lived, for it makes the world consist of a mass of self-existing individuals on the one hand and an absolute State on the other; whereas it is perfectly plain to anybody who truly sees the world that the real world is composed of several communities, large and small, and that a community is something more than the sum of the persons composing it--in other words, it has a real personality, not a fictitious one.¹

If Maitland looked upon Das Deutsche Genossenschaftsrecht as the "greatest book he ever read," Figgis looked upon Maitland's contribution in presenting Gierke's theories to English minds as one of the most important contributions of modern times to English thought on matters pertaining to the philosophy of law.²

Something of the basic nature of that movement in legal philosophy, commonly recognized as the one which, at its core, contends for the recognition of the "real personality" of groups making up society, has been here given with a mind to presenting the important common denominator of the political thinking of Gierke, Maitland, and Figgis. It must be added, however, that just as Figgis was identified with and yet not completely of the "Lux Mundi" School of the English church, so he had an identity of his

1. J. N. Figgis, Churches in the Modern State, (2nd ed.; London, Longmans, Green and Co., 1914), Appendix II, pp. 249-250.

2. The last footnote of Maitland's, "Translator's Introduction," indicates how familiar Figgis was with Maitland's work: "I owe my thanks for many valuable suggestions to Mr. J. N. Figgis whose essays on The Divine Right of Kings (1896) and 'Politics at the Council of Constance' will be known to students." Maitland, op. cit., p. xlv.

own in the school which struggled for the recognition of the freedom and the personality of associations. His own specific emphasis will be considered later in this chapter.

It should not be supposed that Neville Figgis was always the advocate in political thought of the same line of political thinking which made Gierke and Maitland famous. His political convictions were not static. Perhaps it would seem out of character if the man who believed so strongly in the theory of development, who evidenced very real stages of development in his religious life, had not also evidenced a definite progress and change in his political outlook. Figgis as a historian of the political thought of the years preceding and following the Reformation had a talent for dealing with revolutionary happenings against the backdrop of a certain continuous and more or less orderly development. The student discovers in Figgis's political thought a similar history of revolution and evolution.

What was the revolution in Figgis's political thought? In brief, it was a shift in discipleship from Austin to Gierke. It was a complete about-face from a belief that "there must be an ultimate superior, a sovereign in every individual political society, and that positive law must be viewed as derived from the will of that sovereign," to the conviction that the question of sovereignty in any given society is of little consequence as compared with the importance of the recognition and well-being of the group persons within that political society. A certain shift in his thinking as to what should be considered to be the most important political-historical developments, contrasting comments in his historical

works, and direct explanatory remarks dealing with his shift in sympathy all point to the revolution in Figgis's thought.

Figgis said something of the historical interests of his much-learned teacher, Mandell Creighton, that he might well have said of himself:

It is the theatre of European statecraft at the period of transition from the dream of mediaeval unity to the reality of modern nationalism that Creighton loved to gaze upon, and so to raise his readers above the narrow and insular view of history which is characteristic of so many Englishmen.¹

The scope of Figgis's second major historical work, From Gerson to Grotius, might well be defined by what he pointed out to be Creighton's main sphere of interest. His first historical work, The Divine Right of Kings, although chiefly concerned with the development in England of that political theory named in the work's title, was also concerned with the "period of transition from the dream of mediaeval unity to the reality of modern nations."

In choosing first to present a thorough study of The Divine Right of Kings, the political theory which was ascendant in England during a large part of the period of his and his teacher's special political-historical interests, Figgis chose the political theory which, to his mind, was, in the day of its supremacy, the embodiment of the sanest of political viewpoints--that which recognizes a sovereign power, some one authority, whose acts are subject to no legal criticism. Indicative of the importance which he ascribed to the theory, he writes:

1. Figgis, Churches in the Modern State, p. 242.

...the history of the doctrine serves to bridge the gulf between mediaeval and modern thought.¹

Although Figgis never minimized the political-historical importance of the doctrine of Divine Right, in his later works a shift is detected in his estimate of the most important political-historical development during this great period of transition. In From Gerson to Grotius he points to the Conciliar Movement, that fifteenth century effort to establish limited sovereignty and to realize a "communitas communitatum" within the church, and says, indicating a shift in his thinking as to what must be considered as the most important political-historical development:

The Conciliar movement forms the watershed between the mediaeval and the modern world.²

That there was a revolution in Figgis's thought is somewhat more conclusively shown when one reads from the first edition of The Divine Right of Kings, which appeared in 1896:

The State is sovereign. It may legally do what it pleases.
No coequal jurisdiction exists.

and then reads from his article, "Respublica Christiana," which appeared in the "Transactions of the Royal Historical Society" in 1911:

The theory of sovereignty whether proclaimed by John Austin or Justinian, or shouted in conflict by Pope Innocent or Thomas Hobbes, is in reality no more than a venerable superstition.³

As if the above were not evidence enough of revolution in a man's

1. J. N. Figgis, The Divine Right of Kings, (2nd ed.; Cambridge, University Press, 1914), pp. 15-16.

2. Figgis, From Gerson to Grotius, op. cit., p. 31.

3. Figgis, Churches in the Modern State, Appendix I, p. 224.

thinking, there are Figgis's own words on the subject in Churches in the Modern State:

I have come to different notions about the juristic nature of the state, the church, and the individual from those which at one time seemed so clear¹

and from the preface to the second edition of The Divine Right of Kings, which was published in 1914:

On the theory of sovereignty and the relation of small groups to the State, and the notion of "higher law" the opinions of the author have undergone much change; nor has he all in vain heard the wisdom of masters like Acton and Maitland or read the great works of Gierke.²

But, as has already been indicated, there was evolution as well as revolution in Figgis's political thought. The change did not come suddenly. A comment in the preface to Churches in the Modern State offers a valuable key to the stages in his thought which form the background of the revolution.

The author has been led to his present views...by long brooding over the Austinian doctrine and the perception forced on him at last through Maitland and Gierke, that it is either fallacious or so profoundly inadequate as to have no more than a verbal justification. One begins by thinking Austin self-evident, one learns that many qualifications have to be made, and finally one ends by treating his whole method as abstract and theoretic.³

First of all, attention will be given to Figgis's writings which evidence the assumption that Austin⁴ is "self-evident." A brief summary statement of the ground covered in each book or article concerned will be

1. Ibid., p. xi.

2. Figgis, The Divine Right of Kings, 2nd ed.; p. viii.

3. Figgis, Churches in the Modern State, pp. ix-x.

made so as to present the growth of Figgis's political thought in the context of his political-historical works.

The Divine Right of Kings was first written in 1892 in competition for the Prince Consort Prize at Cambridge. It was expanded and rewritten in the next four years and first published in 1896. The book represents a plea for an understanding of the doctrine of the Divine Right of Kings.

Before political life can free itself from what may be called the theocratic stage, it must assert for itself a coequal right to exist with theology. It must claim that politics have a proper and necessary function to perform in the developement of the human race, and that therefore their independent existence must be as much a part of the Divine plan for mankind as is the science of theology or the organization of the Church. That the state is the realization of a true idea, and has a necessary place in the world, is the claim, which was explicitly or implicitly denied by the Papalist, and only made good through the theory of Divine Right.¹

Figgis took the much-ridiculed theory of Divine Right and contended forcefully that its great service was the assertion of the independent authority of secular governments, making Divine Right, in its essential meaning, a doctrine of liberty, proclaiming the freedom of political societies from subjection to an ecclesiastical organization. He ushers the student through the important stages of the doctrine's development: in its first and probably most important stages it was what the above quotation has shown it to be, a doctrine of the right of secular governments to be free from clerical interference. The seventeenth century saw the doctrine in its second stage:

1. Figgis, The Divine Right of Kings, 2nd. ed.; pp. 258-259.

In the political conflicts of the seventeenth century, in which religion played so large a part, the Divine Right of Kings had been the form in which expression had been found for men's reverence for tradition and for their instinctive sense that progress can never come by trampling on old institutions. Thus the theory was the bulwark of the restored monarchy, by rallying sentiment around the King, as the ancient centre and symbol of national life. It had preserved the continuity of the constitutional system, and was probably a main cause of the tranquility, which marked the English alone among the Revolutions of history.¹

Speaking of the doctrine's last stage, its romantic stage, Figgis writes:

From 1688 the Stuart cause is the expression of the "Passion of the past"; and the theory that supports it suffers a like change. All men's hatred of what is new because it is new, their dislike of conquering ideas because they are winning, their love of the antique for no reason than that it is not modern, will draw them to the side of the "king over the water". The Divine Right of Kings has reached its last stage.²

Although Figgis makes it clear that the Theory of Divine Right had reached its last stage following the Restoration, yet he points out that the doctrine has had lasting and beneficial effects in moulding English sentiment:

Again, if the theory be regarded on its purely political side, the conceptions which it enshrined are become part of our common heritage. To the sense of the organic character of the state and of the duty of obedience are due the existence of "law abiding citizens" today and that dislike of all violent breaks with the past, which has ever been the peculiar glory of England...³

It was the believer in the lasting contribution of the Theory of the Divine Right of Kings⁴ to England's heritage who, as a young ordinand,

1. *Ibid.*, p. 168.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 167.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 263-264.

4. In his estimate of the service performed by the theory of Divine Right in seventeenth century England, Figgis was criticised by one of his

having returned to Cambridge from Wells Theological College and Kettering, preached before the Mayor and Corporation of Cambridge at Great St. Mary's on June 20, 1897, in recognition of the Golden Jubilee of Queen Victoria's reign. His sermon began:

"A land of settled government,
 "A land of just and old renown
 "Where Freedom slowly broadens down
 "From precedent to precedent."

And if the cause be partly in the English character, with its hatred of extremes, its capacity for compromise, its sense of justice, it is no less largely the character of her, who has understood and accepted so faithfully the varying developments of the national life, and has been in so true a sense the representative of the English race and its manifold activities.¹

The assumption that Austin is self-evident reoccurs throughout the author's treatise on The Divine Right of Kings. In the first chapter on "Early Ideas of Kingship" he comments:

If, then, it be borne in mind that no theory of sovereignty was or could be held by Bracton, (because there was no developed state), it will not be surprising to find him ascribing to the king rights, which apparently amount to little less than complete sovereignty, while in set terms the king is declared to be under the law. Many passages there are which to modern ears sound inconsistent, such as the statement, that the king is under no one but God, and yet is not above the law. Where then is the source of law? Whence is its sanction derived, if neither the King nor any other person or body of persons are above it?²

reviewers: "And if we wish to know why the Divine Right Theory, after doing its work in bolstering up King against Pope, became so important in the seventeenth century in England, it is in the facts of English history that the explanation must be sought. If it was not a recrudescence of theocracy, in the interest of reactionary kings against Parliament and free institutions, then history will have to be rewritten." Review of "Theory of Divine Right of Kings," The Nation, LXIII, No. 1631.

1. J. N. Figgis, "Wisdom the Source of Rule", a sermon preached before the Mayor and Corporation of Cambridge and the Church of St. Mary's the Great, June 20, 1897. The original is found in Cambridge University Library.

2. Figgis, The Divine Right of Kings, 2nd ed.; p. 32.

In the chapter on "The Holy Roman Empire and the Papacy," the reader discovers these words:

The ideal of the Empire, with Christ as its King and His two vicegerents upon earth, was that of a theocracy. This is the explanation of the otherwise strange fact, that men should ever have believed in so unworkable a theory, as that of two equal heads of the State.¹

And in the chapter dealing with the French development of Divine Right as well as theories of popular rights, he points to Languet, the writer of Vindiciae contra Tyrannos, which contained the ideas that were at the bottom of all theories of popular rights until the eighteenth century, and says:

The author shares with the great Whig philosopher the inability to see that in any developed state there must exist some ultimate supreme authority to whose action no legal limits can be affixed.²

Figgis's next significant work was entitled, "On Some Political Theories of the Early Jesuits," and appeared in 1897, one year following the printing of The Divine Right of Kings. The main purpose of the article seems to be twofold: to present the political aspect of the rise of the Jesuits in relation to similar schools of thought which both preceded and followed the Counter Reformation and to show what was commendable about the Jesuit position. In giving expression to the latter aim, he says in the article:

The evil which Jesuits did has assuredly lived after them. I have tried to bring to light something of the good which has too long been interred in their bones.³

1. Ibid., p. 39.

2. Ibid., p. 114.

3. J. N. Figgis, "On Some Political Theories of the Early Jesuits," Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, XIC, (1897), Book 1, p. 112.

Recognizing two main views of the state which men have entertained since the time of Hildebrand, Figgis points to the Jesuits as supporters of the one which recognizes "the need of remembering that the State was made for man, not man for the State, and setting due limits to the action of the latter," the other view being that which recognizes only "the omnipotent and transcendent worth of government."¹

By their fundamental determination to establish limits upon the absolute sovereignty of the state, by their purely secular theory of the civil state, by their conviction that the state should be limited in its powers especially in religious matters, and by their admission that oppressed people have the right to rebel, Figgis recognizes in the Jesuits a certain affinity with the thinking of two men as widely separated in history and thought as Hildebrand and J. S. Mill.

The more immediate predecessor in political thinking of the Jesuit tendency to place limitations upon the sovereign state is seen by Figgis to be the school of thought which found much of its origin and excellence of expression in the Conciliar Movement. Gerson and Zabarella, leaders in the Conciliar Movement, insisted that the church is not an absolute monarchy, that general councils are superior to the Pope and may depose him, that a mixed government is the best. In time the Jesuit thinkers substituted the word "church" for the word "state," the word "king" for the word "Pope," and proceeded to use that which had been unsuccessful in compromising the "plenitudo potestates" of the Pope to break

1. Ibid., p. 90.

the backs of the sovereign rulers of the national units which had made the Holy Roman Empire little more than a fiction.

The developed theories of the Jesuits are also shown to have been a conspicuous link with later important developments in political thought:

With the Revolutionary Whigs, the connection of Jesuit doctrines is direct and obvious. Their theory of natural rights, of an original contract and of a utilitarian basis to the state, differs but little from the Jesuit doctrine. Thence the transition is easy to Bentham and the greatest happiness of the greatest number. From him to his disciple, Mill, is but a step. So it may be that between the mediaeval Papacy and the modern publicists there exists a closer tie than is apparent.¹

What was chiefly commendable about the Jesuits, according to Figgis, was their having taken an important step by insisting that the civil state has no right to decide matters relating to faith at its own pleasure.

By insisting on the necessary distinction between temporal and spiritual affairs they performed no unimportant service to the cause of truth...²

Although Figgis, in his discussion of the Jesuits, looks back upon the doctrine of Divine Right and acknowledges that its danger lay in the direction of Erastianism, the control of all interests, including religious, in the interest of the state, yet he remains, in principle at least, a disciple of Austin. This allegiance is especially evident as one reads Figgis's criticism of Jesuit dependence on the idea of natural law:

The stress upon natural law made it possible to conceive of a

1. Ibid., p. 94.

2. Ibid., p. 111.

state of society in which contracts had binding force, although positive law did not exist. This seems nonsense to us, as Austin showed.¹

Earlier in the same article he mentions Vasquez, the Jesuit apologist, who makes natural law independent of God:

The occasion is curious. Natural law must be regarded as independent of God the sovereign, as being the embodiment not of caprice but of reason. It is thus used as a sort of fetter on the divine action, in the same way that law conceived as traditional is regarded as independent of any human sovereign. The advocates of the common law of England in the seventeenth century, the believers in fundamental laws abroad, apparently had a similar reluctance to face the idea of sovereignty.²

As has been noted in his article, "On Some political Theories of the Early Jesuits," Figgis shows the intimate connection of the Conciliar Party, the Jesuits, and the Whigs, with an emphasis on the Jesuit contribution. In his article on "Politics at the Council of Constance," he travels over much of the same ground only emphasizing in more detail the specific contribution of the Conciliar Movement to political thought. He held that the Council had a three-fold significance.

The principle of utility is exalted by the fathers to the level of divine ordinance. The superiority of limited monarchy and in the last resort of popular sovereignty, is affirmed, and pure politics appear for the first time on the largest scale.³

Most political issues of the Middle Ages centred around the contest between civil and the spiritual authority. It was only when this problem was not central that an approach to political problems on a more or less purely political basis became a possibility. The Council of Constance

1. Ibid., p. 106.

2. Ibid.,

3. J. N. Figgis, "Politics at the Council of Constance," Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, XIII (read May 18, 1899), p. 106.

provided such a setting.

The contest between the authority, which was directly or indirectly from God, comes here in a different sphere, in fact, instead of being between civil and secular it is for the first time between monarch and people. Divine Right is claimed for the Council versus the Pope, before it was ever extensively claimed for people versus king.¹

The Conciliar Movement was in the direction of limited monarchy and ultimately popular sovereignty in that:

It is the sovereignty of the Church as a whole that is ultimately indefectable and inalienable. The Pope is the minister, the instrument of the church, and his power in ordinary cases is, of course, paramount. But the church is by no means a pure monarchy. It is besides compounded of aristocracy as represented by the College of Cardinals, and representative democracy as exhibited in the Council.²

The principle of utility is exalted to the level of divine ordinance because that which in the church is in order to expediency is considered to be the same as that which is in order to salvation.

In times of crisis the law of conscience, expediency, utility, salvation is the final arbiter.³

If the Pope were to interpret the command to Peter to "feed my sheep" as the gift of an authority to starve them, then, according to Fathers at Constance, he could be resisted on the ground of expediency. In this connection, Figgis goes on to observe:

It is curious that about a century before Machiavelli was to win for himself a "welt-historisch" reputation as the annihilator of the foundation of morality, the theologian reformers of Constance should have elevated the principle of utility into the position of the highest religious importance, and made it part

1. Ibid., p. 110.

2. Ibid., p. 109.

3. Ibid., p. 112.

of their political system.¹

Although in his article on the Council of Constance Figgis deals with the event in political history which he later recognizes as containing the important elements of his later political views, when he wrote this article he was still the disciple of Austin. Admittedly, he makes no mention of the Austinian theme that law, to be valid, must have the sanction of someone who is above the law; but on the whole subject of sovereignty, he is still more Austinian than anything else. Although in favour of the Conciliar Movement's emphasis that sovereignty lies with the church rather than with the Pope, or, politically interpreted, with the state rather than the king, Figgis makes no digression from the Austinian insistence that the ultimate sovereignty must reside in the state. In his article he passes over certain important aspects of the Conciliar Movement, including significantly enough its Gallicanism, i. e., its federalism, which became central to his estimate of the Conciliar Movement's contribution to political thought in his later thinking. With nothing more than a passing reference, he moves on to say:

But after all, these matters were subordinate. The vital question was that as to the government of a unitary state.²

Whatever may have been the chief concern of those gathered at Constance, such at least was Figgis's chief concern at this stage of his political thought. Commenting on the failure of the Conciliar Movement to curb the "plenitudo potestatis" of the Popes, Figgis wrote:

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid., p. 108.



Indeed, the attempts to stem the flowing tide of Papal autocracy by damming it (with both spellings) by that amiable and not too liberal sensualist, Felix V, was like trying to stop an express train with a scarecrow.¹

In 1900 an article by Figgis appeared in the "Journal of Theological Studies" entitled, "Erastus and Erastianism." The question it asked: "How far was Erastus an Erastian?" After dealing with Erastus at some length biographically, with special reference to the important years spent at Heidelberg (1557-1576), Figgis returns to the central problem of the Erastianism of Erastus. The contention of this article is that if Erastianism, as commonly employed, is taken to represent the theory that religion is the creature of the state, then Erastus was not an Erastian.

...Erastus did not write directly in support of the State, but had the object of crying down excommunication.²

Excommunication, as it came to the fore in Heidelberg, under the aegis of Calvinism, was repugnant to Erastus in both theory and practice. He attested that in a state in which only one religion was sanctioned (he never suggested that more than one should be allowed) excommunication had a civic aspect.

It is not calculated to advance a man's prospects in this life to tell his neighbours that his prospects are unpleasant for the next, if they believe you.³

"If they believe you" in the state sanctioning only one religion, the effect is the defamation of character, a kind of coercion which legitimately lies with the state and not with the church whose function is that

1. Ibid., p. 105.

2. Figgis, The Divine Right of Kings, 2nd ed.; "Erastus and Erastianism," p. 319.

3. Ibid., pp. 326-327.

of persuasion and not of government.

Erastus's great contribution, according to Figgis, was his effective polemic against what, to Figgis's mind, was the greatest danger to popular liberty and civil power in the sixteenth century, the clericalism of the Calvinists:

...but for Erastus and his followers, .. there might have been--there nearly was--an agelong enslavement of human thought and action to a system in some respects more narrow because more complete, less broadly human, less careful of culture and intellectual enlightenment, than was the system of the mediaeval world taken at its worst.¹

The main consideration which Figgis singles out to show that Erastus was not an Erastian in the commonly accepted sense of the term is that according to Erastus the magistrate has no power to transgress the Word of God. Being a magistrate in a state in which the ruler and the ruled are of the same religion and making his decisions in matters affecting things religious under the guidance of the church, the magistrate is not in a position to be an Erastian in the sense that religion is the creature of the State.

Referring to this article in the preface to the second edition of The Divine Right of Kings, to which "Erastus and Erastianism" is an appendix, Figgis confesses:

It shares with the main body of the book the defect of being written beneath the shadow of the Austinian idol.²

The following quotation illustrates the fact:

It is the impossibility of two-co-equal jurisdictions in a State

1. Ibid., p. 342.

2. Figgis, The Divine Right of Kings, 2nd ed.; p. ix.

which strikes Erastus. And this is obvious. One of them must be final, so far as the State be united.¹

Speaking of the arrival of the day of toleration which Erastus had not envisioned, Figgis says:

To employ a familiar method, toleration was the higher unity in which were resolved the contrary, but complementary ideals of secular authority and spiritual independence.²

Although it is a "higher unity" of which he speaks, unity of whatever kind within the state is still championed by Figgis. The foregoing book, The Divine Right of Kings, 1896, and the foregoing articles, "On Some Political Theories of the Early Jesuits," 1897, "Politics at the Council of Constance," 1899, and "Erastus and Erastianism," 1900, were all "written beneath the shadow of the Austinian idol" and belong primarily to that period in his thought which he described by saying, "One begins by thinking Austin self-evident."³ But Figgis had gone on to say, "one learns that many qualifications have to be made."⁴ This middle stage in his political thinking is less easy of definition. As late as 1900, with the writing of "Erastus and Erastianism," he labels his work as being "written under the shadow of the Austinian idol," and as soon after that date as 1905 he identifies the article of his published in that year, "Bartolus and the Development of European Political Ideas," with "present views," meaning views entertained in 1913 and therefore largely reflective of that last stage in his thought which he labeled by saying, "one ends by

1. Figgis, The Divine Right of Kings, 2nd ed.; "Erastus and Erastianism," pp. 333-334.

2. Ibid., p. 341.

3. Supra, pp. 42.

4. Ibid.

treating his (Austin's) whole method as abstract and theoretic."¹

The three main articles written by Figgis between 1900 and 1905 were "William Warburton," 1901, "John Wyclife," 1902, and "Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century," written about 1904. The latter was Figgis's contribution to the third volume of the great work edited by Acton, The Cambridge Modern History, and, as its title indicates, was entirely devoted to political thought; whereas the other two articles were concerned with things political only in the context of an estimate of the total contribution of the two men under consideration. In "Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century," Figgis writes:

We may have our own opinion of the society which the clericalist desired to maintain. But it is not to be denied that the fundamental principle of ecclesiastic protagonists, the recognition of other societies beyond the State, so far from being an unwarrantable encroachment of civil rights, is the best preservative against the practical dangers which may, and sometimes do, follow from an acceptance of the undiluted conception of legal sovereignty...there are bonds of association which do not spring from the fiat of positive law, and may not, save in minor matters, be controlled by considerations of political expediency, justified by an abstract theory of sovereignty. For the true conception of the State it is needed first to realize the idea of sovereignty, and afterwards to realize its practical limitations.²

This is certainly in the spirit of that stage regarding his views on Austinian sovereignty wherein "one learns that many qualifications have to be made." This article, and the earlier articles on "William Warburton" (1901) and "John Wyclife" (1902) are more to be identified with Figgis's subsequent works and the views for which he is best known,

1. Ibid.

2. J. N. Figgis, "Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century," Cambridge Modern History, III.

rather than with earlier views. In them we begin to hear of Professor Maitland's work, about "Genossenschaftsrecht", and about the personality of groups. It should be further noted that From Gerson to Grotius, the book on political thought for which Figgis is perhaps best known, first published in 1907, was initially presented in the form of The Birbeck Lectures at Trinity College in 1900, only to be revised about 1904 in the direction of Figgis's later views on law and sovereignty. The revision was much in keeping with the spirit contained in "Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century" and only slightly more severe with the Austinian point of view.

If the revolution in Figgis's political thought were to be pinpointed, one would pick the year 1900, the year of the publication of Maitland's work, but would be under compulsion to show two things: that the revolution had been brooding for some years, and that Figgis relinquished the old categories somewhat reluctantly even after the revolution had taken place. As early as the article on the Jesuits, he had realized that unlimited sovereignty must be qualified in matters of faith and conscience:

The first step towards freedom of conscience is to take away from the civil state that power which is backed up by physical force, the right of deciding at its own pleasure what shall be encouraged and what shall be suppressed. It is a real advance when anybody possessing purely moral authority claims to decide these questions, to make its decisions binding on the State. Now that was the action of the Jesuits. They did not argue for toleration. Who did? But, like Knox and Goodman, they demanded that the civil state should not touch matters of faith apart from the spiritual power. They claimed freedom of faith - true - it was freedom for one faith only - but that was far better than the theory of Hobbes, which makes the State for

its own ends the teacher of truth. The danger of the theory of Divine Right of Kings, true and useful as it was in many respects, was in the direction of Erastianism. Against this the Jesuits set up a protest. They denied any power in the state as such to decide religious matters.¹

Certainly one detects here a difference in tone from that which predominates in The Divine Right of Kings.

The article on "Erastus and Erastianism" also insists that the sovereign shall be limited in his control of things ecclesiastic:

For assuredly there is no less reasonable view than that which permits a magistrate to set up a Church on purely political grounds and to prohibit all others.²

That Figgis found it difficult to forsake the original Austinian theory of sovereignty and that this period of "seeing that many qualifications have to be made" extended well into those works which were written after 1900, the year which has been recognized as the probable year of revolution in his political thinking, may be seen in excerpts from several of his "post-reformation" works. Referring to Bodin in "Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century," he writes:

He developes the notion of sovereign authority, inalienable, inprescriptable, incapable of legal limitation, very much as through Hobbes, and Rosseau, and Austin, it has come down to us. He has the qualities of all who perceive with any clearness the fact of sovereignty and also their defects. ... For the true conception of the State it is needed first to realize the idea of sovereignty and afterwards to realize its practical limitations.³

1. Figgis, "On Some Political Theories of the Early Jesuits," pp. 110-111.

2. Figgis, The Divine Right of Kings, 2nd ed.; "Erastus and Erastianism," p. 339.

3. Figgis, "On Some Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century," p. 739.

And writing in 1905 on "Bartolus and the Development of European Political Ideas," which he labeled as representing the views which he held in 1913, he says in admiration of Bartolus:

He clearly holds the usual maxims that whatever the sovereign permits he commands and sovereignty is inalienable. But - and here comes in the positive quality of Bartolus's mind - law is one thing and fact another.¹

One detects here a certain affinity, if not a certain nostalgia, for the old established categories of sovereignty; yet the cold facts of the demise of the unitary state, if indeed it ever truly existed, compelled the compromise of old allegiances and ultimately, in Figgis's case, there arose a strong revolt against them. In summary, then, that period in Figgis's thinking described by "one learns that many qualifications have to be made," invades both the first stage wherein "one begins by thinking Austin self-evident" and the third stage wherein "one ends by treating his whole method as abstract and theoretic."

Figgis's third and last stage in political thought as represented by "one ends by treating the whole Austinian method as abstract and theoretic" coincides, from the positive standpoint, with his having become a disciple of the "Genossenschaftsrechtheorie," which contends for the rights of groups to live and grow in any given society on the ground that they are real persons. By definition, the "Genossenschaftsrecht" is at odds with the Austinian theory of sovereignty, the main tenets of which are given by Hearnshaw:

1. Figgis, The Divine Right of Kings, 2nd ed.; "Bartolus and the Development of European Political Ideas," pp. 356-357.

...the ultimate sovereignty must reside, and ought to reside in the State. For the State represents the community as a whole, and, as the world is at present constituted, it is the only institution that does so. Hence, however large an autonomy the State may leave to Churches, to trade unions, to universities, and to other voluntary associations of a sectional kind, in the last resort its authority must, in the interest of the community as a whole, override them all. So long as the primary division of mankind is the present division into nations, so long must each nation, organized as a State and acting through its Government, be supreme within the territorial limits of its jurisdiction in all causes and over all persons.¹

From that time which has been labeled as the revolution in his thought, Figgis makes common use of such terms as "single society," "one society," "two societies," "societas perfecta," and "communitas communitatum." When he speaks of "one society" or "single society," he is describing the state or the political theory which is the embodiment of Austinianism, the state or theory which recognizes or contends for the recognition of only one sovereign power in any given state. No group within the state is recognized as having any inherent rights, any personality, of its own. Groups exist by the consent, the fiat, of the single sovereign power. When he speaks of a state as having "two societies," he is speaking of the state in which Austinianism has been compromised, the state which recognizes in fact or theory that at least one group other than itself and within the state, usually the church, is a society in its own right, a social entity, existing by virtue of its own irrepressible living personality and which does not exist simply because the society which is the state grants its permission. When Figgis

1. F. J. C. Hearnshaw, Some Great Political Idealists of the Christian Era, (London, George G. Harrap & Co., 1937), pp. 236-237.

refers to the thought which argues for the recognition of the church as a social unit complete in itself and independent, a principle championed in essence by Jesuits and Presbyterians, he refers to it as contending for the recognition of the church as a perfect society, a "societas perfecta." The term, "societas perfecta," it is to be observed, may be used to describe any political body which is recognized as having an inherent life of its own; therefore, the state, as well as the church or any other social group, may be referred to as a "societas perfecta." In the preface to the second edition of From Gerson to Grotius, Figgis writes:

I feel, however, bound to set down here my gratitude to the Rev. T. A. Lacey for a suggestion respecting the Church as a "societas perfecta," which more than anything else has helped to illuminate the subject, and is the main ground of any improvement there may be in the present form of the lectures on that in which they were delivered.¹

The expression, "communitas communitatum," is that which for Figgis defines the ideal state, the state which is recognized in theory for what it is in fact, a community of communities, a community made up of any number of "perfect societies." Figgis's political-historical works, as written after 1900 under the prevailing conviction that Austinian notions of sovereignty are "abstract and theoretic," are fundamentally a study of the rise and fall of two fundamentally conflicting conceptions of the state as suggested by these various key expressions: the "two society" as against the "one society"; the theory which recognizes two or more kinds of "societas perfecta" in one state as opposed to the "single society" conception of the state; the "Genossenschaft" as opposed to the

1. Figgis, From Gerson to Grotius, p. vi.

"Herrschaftsverband"; the view of the state as a "communitas communitatum" as against the theory of a sovereign power possessing "plenitudo potestatis," whereby all lesser societies within the state exist by its permission only. In the pages to follow, Figgis's major works written after 1900 will be considered in the light of his preoccupation with this basic conflict of political ideas.

Attention will first be focused on From Gerson to Grotius, which was originally published in 1907. This was Figgis's first major work relating to things political which was published after the revolution in his political thinking. This work, it should be recalled, was initially presented in the form of the Birbeck Lectures at Trinity College in 1900 and, according to the book's introduction, revised appreciably about 1904. From Gerson to Grotius is presented in "capsule form" in the third volume of the Cambridge Modern History under the heading, "Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century."¹

The Conciliar Movement, the movement with which Gerson's name is identified, is the first historical development having important political implications to which Figgis turns the reader's attention in his From Gerson to Grotius. As in the original article, "Politics at the Council of Constance," he lauds the work of the Council in exalting the principle of utility to the level of a divine ordinance; in asserting the superiority of limited monarchy; in contending ultimately for popular sovereignty; and in providing the setting in which pure politics, politics not beset

1. Reference shall henceforth be made to those works of lesser significance written between 1900 and 1907 only as they contribute to an understanding of Figgis's preoccupation with the conflict of the unitary and Roman as opposed to the federalistic and Teutonic conceptions of the state.

with the problem of the primacy of the civil or spiritual authority, could be discussed. The treatment of the subject in the article as compared with its treatment in the book differs chiefly in this: in the article he places his emphasis on the Conciliar Movement's effort to establish a limited monarchy; in the book he emphasizes its tendency to limit sovereignty. This distinction may not be an obvious one; indeed, it may be an artificial one in that what does limit monarchy also tends to limit sovereignty; but for the purpose of showing Figgis's changing emphasis, it remains a helpful distinction. In the article he writes:

The reiterated assertion that the whole must be greater than the parts (*orbis major urbi*) goes to the real gist of the Conciliar Movement.¹

The emphasis here is that unlimited sovereignty does not lie in any one individual in the state but that it does reside in all the people who make up the state. This, however, does not serve to limit state sovereignty. Sovereignty is still contained in the single unit, the state, and remains unitary, though not resident in any one individual.

In From Gerson to Grotius he writes:

Had the Conciliar Movement secured lasting success, the principles which were symbolised by the division of the Council into nations and in the Concordats with which it closed might have been fruitful in the future. As it was, alike in England and abroad, the notion of a single omniscient social union set over against a mass of individuals became the normal idea of the State. The "*Communitas Communitatum*" becomes a mere collection of units.²

...Even when pure monarchy was not regarded as an ideal, it

1. Figgis, "Politics at the Council of Constance," p. 113.

2. Figgis, From Gerson to Grotius, p. 45.

only gave way to a notion of the unlimited sovereignty of the State, however constituted, which is false to the facts of human life, and creates an unnecessary chasm between the individual and the supreme power, instead of bridging the gulf by the recognition of other and smaller societies, with inherent powers of life, not the result of the fiat of governmental authority. Constance and Basel saw the last, the most splendid, and in the event the most unfortunate of all the many medieval attempts to limit the sovereign power.¹

Here the emphasis is upon the federal aspect of the movement as in the division of the Councils into nations which actually tended to limit sovereignty. Sovereignty is not unitary but multiple, with each group having an inherent life and claim to a measure of sovereignty of its own. In the article Figgis lauds the appeal to the sense of corporate unity in place of the stress on individual exclusiveness (of the Pope), wherein the rights of the whole group are protected against the encroachment of the individual in the position of power. In From Gerson to Grotius, Figgis's appeal is to the federalistic aspect of the Conciliar Movement wherein the rights of groups within the larger group are recognized and protected. In brief, the earlier work shows Figgis to be thinking of the state as being principally a single society, whereas in the later work he is thinking of the state as a "communitas communitatum." From what has been said, however, it ought not to be assumed that limited monarchy was in his mind in direct opposition to limited sovereignty. The appreciation of the one was an important step toward the appreciation of the other.

That the state through the Middle Ages, including the time of the Conciliar Movement, was consistently looked upon as a "single society"

1. Ibid., p. 46.

and that the church and state were not looked upon as separate societies are thoughts constantly reasserted in From Gerson to Grotius and other works.

The medieval struggles between Popes and Emperors are wrongly regarded as a conflict between Church and State, if by that is meant the relations between two societies. The medieval mind, whether clerical or anti-clerical, envisaged the struggle as one between different officers of the same society, never between two separate bodies.¹

Figgis devoted an entire paper entitled, "Respublica Christiana," which he read to the Royal Historical Society and which was published in that Society's Transactions in 1911, asserting that the medieval state was a "single society." By insisting that such was the case, Figgis was at variance with a man whose historical and political judgment he greatly admired--William Maitland. Maitland wrote in his Lectures on Constitutional History:

While we are speaking of this matter of sovereignty, it will be well to remember that our modern theories run counter to the deepest convictions of the Middle Ages--to their whole manner of regarding the relation between Church and State. Though they may consist of the same units, though every man may have his place in both organisms, these two bodies are distinct. the general conviction is that the two are independent, that neither derives its authority from the other. Obviously, when men think thus, while they more or less consistently act upon this theory, they have no sovereign in Austin's sense; before the Reformation Austin's doctrine was impossible.²

Figgis's contention, on the other hand, is that if one is considering the ruling thought of the Middle Ages, it is by and large impossible to describe the mediaeval outlook as anything other than Austinian or something

1. Ibid., p. 43.

2. Figgis, Churches in the Modern State, "Respublica Christiana," pp. 193-195, quoting Lectures on Constitutional History, pp. 101-102.

very like it.

Nobody in the Middle Ages denied that the king was God's minister, or that the bishops were great lords in the commonwealth. Pope and emperor, when they quarrelled, quarrelled like brothers, as members of the same society, the "Civitas Dei."¹

The major exception to the rule of Austinian sovereignty during that period was the fact of the feudal commonwealth, an aspect of the life of the Middle Ages which was the genius of much of Gierke's "Genossenschaftstheorie."

The importance which Figgis ascribed to the Conciliar Movement² may be detected from his words:

Probably the most revolutionary official document in the history of the world is the decree of the Council of Constance asserting its superiority to the Pope, and striving to turn into a tepid constitutionalism the Divine authority of a thousand years. The movement is the culmination of medieval constitutionalism. It forms the watershed between the medieval and the modern world.³

It formed "the watershed between the mediaeval and modern world" because, in its expression, it gave voice to constitutional principles which would be called upon in the future to limit autocracy in the State. It heralded the day when discerning men would look upon the state as "communitas communitatum." In its failure, it perpetuated and accelerated under new forms the "single society" concept of the state.

Figgis held that the failure of the Conciliar Movement was ac-

1. Ibid., p. 199.

2. Figgis's interest in the Conciliar Movement was aroused in no small part by Mandell Creighton, of whom Figgis wrote: "His most profound research lay in a period scarcely known to Englishmen, yet worthier of study than many of the more picturesque epics of Church history--the period of the Conciliar Movement." Figgis, Churches in the Modern State, "Three Cambridge Historians: Creighton, Maitland and Acton," p. 235.

3. Figgis, From Gerson to Grotius, p. 31.

countable in no small part for the rise of the Protestant Reformation.

We may condemn as we will the violence of the Reformation, but it was a catastrophe rendered inevitable by the failure of milder methods. Caution succeeded to physic.¹ ... Their failure (the principles of Constance) marks the beginning of the modern world. It paved the way for Luther and Machiavelli in the State, for Ignatius Loyola and Manning in the Church.²

In speaking of Luther, Figgis insists that he championed the idea of civil and ecclesiastical authorities as co-workers within a single society, thus perpetuating a condition which had, in Figgis's eyes, typified the Middle Ages. What was revolutionary in Luther's approach to the "single society" was that he, as well as Zwingli, and Anglicans like Witgift and Hooker, circumscribed the unitary church-state within the bounds of the nation or territorial estate with the balance of power in the hands of the state authorities, whereas in the Middle Ages the single church-state was as wide as all Christendom, with the balance of power more often than not in the hands of the church.

Or, to phrase it again differently, the medieval mind conceived of its universal Church-State, with power ultimately fixed in the Spiritual head bounded by no territorial frontier; the Protestant mind places all ecclesiastical authority below the jurisdiction and subject to the control of the "Godly Prince," who is omnipotent in his own dominion.³

Figgis thus shows that Luther and those who shared his ideas about church and state, however they may have differed in other matters, were, in matters of church and state, both dependent upon and independent of the major emphases of the Middle Ages. Figgis emphasizes that the continu-

1. Ibid., p. 32.

2. Ibid., p. 33.

3. Ibid., p. 55.

ing notion of the state as a "single society" was a carry-over from the Middle Ages and explains the comparative ease with which the halo was shifted from the sacred to the secular head. Such was the reasoning which caused Figgis to dispute Maitland's idea of "two societies" in the Middle Ages.

...if we accept Maitland's view, we should be left with no intelligible explanation of certain phenomena in the sixteenth century, to say nothing of existing controversies and modes of thought.¹

The subject of From Gerson to Grotius is asserted to be:

...those changes in men's thoughts about politics which bridge the gulf between the medieval and the modern world.²

The most significant aspect of that revolution was represented to Figgis's mind by the transition from the sole authority of the church to the sole authority of the state. The Reformation was seen to be largely productive of this change, especially because of the influence of Luther.

Luther and his followers were guilty of what to Figgis had become the mortal sin of political thought and practice: they denied the inherent right of groups within the state.

Their doctrine was that all coercive authority was vested in the prince by Divine Right; that the power of the state was absolutely vested in him; that no other separate organization could exist except by his fiat, or by his delegation....no real social units are to exist apart from the State. The medieval notion of a "communitas communitatum" gives way to the civilian doctrine of the omniscient State set over against a mass of individuals. ... The unity and universality and essential rightness of the sovereign territorial State, and the denial of every extra-territorial or independent communal form of life,

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1. Figgis, Churches in the Modern State, "Respublica Christiana," p. 198.
 2. Figgis, From Gerson to Grotius, p. 3.

are Luther's lasting contribution to politics.¹

In the third chapter of From Gerson to Grotius, Figgis links the names of Luther and Machiavelli. Although it is not suggested that Luther would have sanctioned a Machiavelli, yet it is implied that in giving first place to the Prince, even though his motive was to obtain freedom from the spiritual and political tyranny of the Papacy, and in his insistence on passive obedience, Luther prepared the way and played in the hands of one who would enshrine "Reason of State" as the guiding light of state action.

Figgis also identified Luther, in part, with the "Politiques," a sixteenth century French political party made up largely of Catholics, which developed to the fullest extent Luther's passive obedience and Machiavelli's making of the state an end in itself. After Luther, the "Politiques" are assailed to have been the most enthusiastic supporters of Divine Right. The difference between them lay in the fact that whereas Luther would not tolerate any other religious bodies, the "Politiques" would and did for the sake of the unity of the state. The motive for religious toleration among the "Politiques" is further described by Figgis:

The new religion (the Protestant religion) may be all its enemies declare it to be. But it is a fact. It is here. We can only get rid of it at the cost of deluging the country with blood, or replenishing the population of our enemies. Religious uniformity is a blessing; it is of the "bene esse" of a State. But it is not of the "esse," and in case of need, we can live without it.²

1. Ibid., pp. 69-70.

2. Ibid., p. 100.

In spite of a limited kind of toleration, it is clear that the "Politiques" were as much the exponents of the state as a "single society" as was Luther.

But the Reformation was not only contributory to and productive of the omnipotence and unity of the modern state. Another result of the Reformation was popular freedom.

...it is only some moral or religious motive that can in an age like the sixteenth century be at all available against the dominant tendencies.¹

The dominant tendencies were all in the direction of establishing the unitary sovereign state. After the Renaissance, Reception, and Reformation, the power of Canon Law was undermined, the Holy Roman Empire became only the shadow of a reality, and feudal rights practically disappeared, all of which in their day of strength had served as checks on the complete realization of the "single society" national state.

The conditions for a full theory of sovereignty existed and were active. There was a very real danger that this discovery--for it was a discovery--of a power that could not be bound by law because it could make law--would produce a more enduring tyranny than any hitherto known...²

It was only a zeal inspired by religious conviction that could resist either unto martyrdom or toleration.

It must be noticed however, Figgis emphasized, that the religions which in their political ramifications were productive of freedom were almost without exception desirous that the state should persecute in the name of the one true religion rather than tolerate any other. And yet, by

1. *Ibid.*, p. 117.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 120.

virtue of the determination of each religious body not to be destroyed and to either obtain or maintain control in a state where more than one religion was fighting for control, a tolerance and freedom came into being which had never been their object as such to establish.

What they desired, was not liberty or tolerance, but domination and independence. Happily the power of the State proved everywhere too strong for their desire (except perhaps for a brief period in Scotland); but though they did not gain dominion, they secured, what has been better, tolerance. Political liberty is the residuary legatee of ecclesiastical animosities.¹

Figgis then proceeds to be more explicit:

The two religious bodies which have done the most to secure "the rights of man" are those two which really cared least about individual liberty...the Roman Catholic Church and the Presbyterian.²

First, with regard to Calvinism:

Calvinism was what neither Lutheranism nor Anglicanism nor Romanism was, a republican if not a democratic system. Practically it doubtless meant the oligarchy of the preachers or the tyranny "worse than Papal" of ruling elders; certainly it did not favour individual liberty; but it was opposed in theory to secular interference, and by its own methods to monarchical power. Hence in spite of itself Calvinism in France, in the Netherlands and Scotland became either in the world of thought or in that of practice the basis of modern liberty.³

In the writings which preceded the revolution in his own thinking, Figgis is adamant in his assertion that Calvinism, as such, holds no brief for freedom. In The Divine Right of Kings he had written:

But in regard to one ecclesiastical system other than the Roman, the taunt of Jesuitism is more truly justified. Presbyterianism, as exhibited in Geneva or Scotland, veritably claims, as did the

1. Ibid., p. 118.

2. Ibid., p. 118.

3. Ibid., p. 119.

Papacy, to control the state in the interests of an ecclesiastical corporation ... "new presbyter is but old priest writ large" is a maxim of deeper import than is sometimes imagined. It is the felicitous expression of men's sense of the danger still to be apprehended from clericalism. The same mischievous claims to place secular governments under the heel of an ecclesiastical organization, as had led to so much conflict in the Middle Ages and were only finally overthrown by the Reformation, had reappeared in a yet more irritating form in the Presbyterian system. The condition of Geneva under Calvin was an object-lesson, which neither statesmen nor patriotic churchmen were likely to ignore.¹

In terms of the important distinction which became in large part Figgis's measure of a political viewpoint's merit or lack of merit, Figgis held that Calvin, Knox, and most of the other spokesmen of Calvinism shared with men as diverse as Luther and Laud the error of treating church and state as merely different departments of the one great society. But unlike Luther, they placed the state at the disposal of the church.

Brief attention should be given to Figgis's account of those three essentially Calvinistic movements in France, Scotland, and the Netherlands, which, to his mind, were productive of though not pursuant of freedom. In those nations not ruled by Calvinists, Calvinists could not share Calvin's insistence on passive obedience, whereby government of whatever form is to be obeyed as a religious duty, and still survive.

Speaking of the Scottish Reformation, Figgis says that:

...it affords, perhaps, the most complete and consistent expression of the duty of rebellion, alike in theory and practice, which we possess outside ultramontine pamphleteering. In each case there is a similar claim in the background for an ecclesiastical independence which may mean supremacy. John Knox, while he allows his monarchs to play the part of Josiah, did not desire to tolerate any idolaters; and had he been powerful enough would certainly have made a "right

1. Figgis, The Divine Right of Kings, 2nd ed.; pp. 186-187.

faith" as much a condition of legitimacy as did the Counter Reformation ... his sense of the value of the particular religious society was as strong as that of the Jesuits, and like them he employed the means recommended by Machiavelli to attain his ends; among those means murder and rebellion had a natural home in the Scotland of 1555-80.¹

The Huguenots, following the massacre of Saint Bartholomew, made a significant contribution to the cause of liberty. Du Plessis Mornay in his Vindiciae contra Tyrannos gave the best expression to their cause.

He submitted that:

Between the Almighty on the one hand and king and people on the other there is an original contract.... This contract is on God's side one of protection, on that of the nation, maintenance of the true religion... A prince who persecutes the faith is a rebel against God, no more a lawful sovereign than is a Pope deposed for heresy.²

The author of the Vindiciae, Figgis points out, postulates a second contract between king and people:

which makes allegiance depend on good government, and places civil rights on a firmer basis than that of royal grant.³

This idea of second contract, Figgis suggested, served the cause of freedom against the claims of kings who, possessed with an exalted notion of sovereignty, looked upon all civil rights as matters of grace, not of right.

It is against this claim that the idea of contract proved so valuable - for it gave to the public the consciousness that their rights were no less rooted in the constitution of the courts than were those of the king.⁴

1. Figgis, From Gerson to Grotius, p. 127.

2. Ibid., p. 134.

3. Ibid., p. 135.

4. Ibid., p. 135.

Though the Vindiciae was indicative of the spirit of the Huguenots and buttressed the very spirit of liberty, yet it was not, Figgis shows, a democratic movement.

All resistance on their part (the part of individuals) is rigidly condemned, prayers and tears are to be their weapons. Resistance must be orderly, directed by those estates which represent the kingdom rather than the king; or by those persons whose position is of public not private character. In this last provision we see how deeply the aristocratic spirit dominates the writer; ...¹

The Huguenots ceased in any sense to be the disciples of liberty. With the death of the Duke of Avignon in 1584, they abandoned their theories of contract and found their cause to be better served by becoming supporters of legitism.

And then with regard to the pre-eminently Calvinistic Netherlands:

...it was rather in spite of themselves than for any other cause that the Dutch possessed the influence they did. Their supreme object was their own independence of the foreigner, and the preservation of their own religion and of local rights. The first object had nothing to do with the political liberty proper, for it is secured equally well and often more effectively under a national absolutism. The second in no way meant the toleration of other forms of faith, and even in their hours of direct distress, the Prince of Orange had the utmost difficulty in securing decent treatment for the Catholics. The third, indeed, had a connection with liberty and may have been the main cause which prevented a thorough absolutism. Certainly it helped towards a theory of federalism.²

Speaking of Althusius who, along with Grotius, crystallized into a system the principles of the Dutch movement, Figgis writes:

But the point to notice here is that this federalistic idea is to be found in Althusius and through him connects itself with the medieval theory of community life. There is not much dif-

1. Ibid., p. 137.

2. Ibid., p. 171.

ference between that idea of the "communitas communitatum" which the Middle Ages meant by the commons, and Althusius' notion of the State as above all else a "consociatio consociationum." He definitely protests against those who refuse to consider the smaller associations such as the family as anything but economic. The novelty in him is his view of the State as entirely built up on the principle of associations.¹

Figgis reveled in the realization that the Dutch, in pleading the cause of the "Selbständigkeit" of societies, were on the battleground of this century's fight for freedom; but he registers his disappointment in their having failed to apply the principle to the relations between church and state. He saw Althusius and Grotius to be strong adherents of the Erastian view, the view of the sovereign state as having ecclesiastical among other ministers.

In Althusius, despite his federalism, we have no hint of any sort of independence for the Church; it is not envisaged as a separate society. Its officers are merely a part of the general machinery of the State.²

Only laterly did Figgis recognize in certain Presbyterian writings the basic elements of a "two society" system. This was in contrast to his earlier working presumption that, wherein Presbyterianism was instrumental as a force in bringing "two society" systems about, it was only due to the historical accident of their having found themselves in states where the sovereign power was at variance with them in the matter of religion. This recognition of "two society" tendencies among certain Presbyterian thinkers is incidental in From Gerson to Grotius, quite explicit in the article, "Respublica Christiana," published in 1911, and still more

1. Ibid., p. 179.

2. Ibid., p. 183.

explicit in "Aaron's Rod Blossoming" or "Jus Divinum in 1646," which was delivered in May of 1913 as a lecture at the University of Leeds. Giving a reason for the inclusion of the latter article in the preface to the second edition of The Divine Right of Kings, Figgis writes:

...I wrote the pages on Presbyterianism (in The Divine Right of Kings) without understanding how deeply its exponents (at least from the days of Cartwright and Andrew Melville) were imbued with the doctrine of the two kingdoms.¹

Speaking of the political scene following the Reformation and more at length of "two society" leanings among Presbyterians, he writes:

But where either prince or people were not able to make their own religion supreme or universal within the territorial State, the conception of two distinct societies tended to grow up. It is really not in the thought of Calvin. .. I do not think that Knox, any more than the other reformers, had any real notion of this distinction. But towards the end of Elizabeth's reign it is certainly to be found in Cartwright and the whole English Presbyterian movement. Andrew Melville developed it in Scotland; and Robert Browne, the originator of the Independents, was inspired by this notion in the pamphlet "Reformation Without Tarring for Any."²

In "Jus Divinum in 1646" Figgis quotes Melville:

"Therefore, Sir, as divers times I have told you, so now again I must tell you there are two kings and two kingdoms in Scotland, that is King James the head of the Commonwealth, and there is Christ Jesus the King of the Church, whose subject King James VI is, and of whose kingdom he is not a king, nor a lord, nor a head, but a member."³

In keeping with Figgis's matured conviction that the state is a "communitas communitatum" and should be recognized as such legally, Figgis says

1. Figgis, The Divine Right of Kings, 2nd ed.; pp. vii-viii.

2. Figgis, Churches in the Modern State, "Respublica Christiana," pp. 216-217.

3. Figgis, The Divine Right of Kings, 2nd ed.; "Jus Divinum in 1646," p. 286.

of the Presbyterian contribution toward "two society" thinking:

They were right in asserting that there were two kingdoms; where they were wrong was in denying that there might be twenty-two.¹

In the final analysis, from Figgis's standpoint, the only reason that Calvinism was productive of freedom in some few places, as it had not been in Geneva, lay in the fact that in states like France, where they fought for control, they succeeded at least in gaining recognition and a right to continue to exist.

The Jesuits were the representatives of the Roman-Catholic Church, who, in company with the Presbyterians, made up "the two which cared least about individual liberty and yet which had done the most to secure the rights of man."

With a few changes in the direction of the third and final stage of Figgis's political thought, the chapter on the Jesuits in From Gerson to Grotius makes many of the same observations about them as did the previously mentioned article. Both take note of the secular character of the Jesuit conception of civil power.

The point to notice is that they conceive the civil power as purely secular; and to a certain extent as independent. This is at once similar to the view of Presbyterians like Cartwright or Melville.²

In the article Figgis compared the Jesuits to one group of Presbyterians:

Knox, Goodman, Bucham and Cartwright held a theory of the subjection of the civil to the ecclesiastical power hardly dis-

1. Ibid., p. 290.

2. Figgis, From Gerson to Grotius, p. 157.

tinguishable from the Jesuit one.¹

In the article Figgis is associating the Jesuits and Presbyterians in their common insistence on a freedom of conscience in religious matters in the face of sovereign powers disinclined to tolerate them; whereas, in the referring to them in From Gerson to Grotius, he is associating them because in their common recognition of the secular character of the state they also tended to recognize a certain independence of the state from the church. In the later work the common ground of the two groups is their progress toward the recognition of the state to be what the Jesuits early assumed the church to be--a "societas perfecta."

Figgis writes describing his later estimate of the Jesuits contribution:

In a word, the relations of Church and State are international; the Pope is no longer the head of one great community, of which the kingdoms are the provinces. Whether Bellarmine quite saw this is doubtful, whether he even meant more than a verbal concession to the other side cannot be proved; but taken in conjunction with their view of the different origins of civil and religious power, and the facts of the case in regard to Roman Catholics in England or Germany, and the depression of the Holy Roman Empire in favour of national States, there can I think be little doubt that the Jesuit view was really paving the way for a great change. No longer was Christendom a whole. That had disappeared absolutely with the religious peace of Augsburg and would be recognised finally in 1648. No longer was the great Church-State with its twin heads even an ideal. But (and this is true even of Catholic States) there are now a multitude of communities possessing within themselves complete independence; only "the liberty of each must not hinder the liberty of all," and so the Pope as head of one of these communities must inter-

1. Figgis, "On Some Political Theories of the Early Jesuits," p. 93. Cartwright's name appears in both quotations, but in the first case he is assumed to be identified with the strongly "single society" assumptions of Calvin and Knox while, in the latter, Figgis has discovered there was much in his thought which was apology for "two societies."

fere where necessary for his subjects. (True, that in this case the members are scattered throughout the other communities, and are identified with the same physical persons as the subjects of the civil states.) But we have henceforth two communities brought into relation; no longer, as in the medieval view, one community with separate departments.¹

The theory of the indirect power of the Pope whereby he interferes in state life not directly as a monarch of the world but simply as guardian of the religious interests of the people is said, by Figgis, to mark this important change from the idea of a commonwealth with different offices to the modern conception of the church and state as two distinct social entities.

Figgis's works are primarily concerned with the "one society" and "two society" conceptions of the state as they manifest themselves on the stage of European politics in the era which, it may be said, serves to divide the medieval from the modern world; however, in a number of places he does trace the movement of these concepts both previous to and following the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

The history of the "two society" concept which tends to recognize the inherent rights and personality of at least one social unit other than the state is shown to be meager both before the Conciliar Movement and after the Reformation. Pointing to one historical antecedent he writes:

The analysis of forms, begun by St. Thomas on the Aristotelian basis (Aristotle advocated a limited monarchy), set on foot the habit of reasoning about political societies.²

The same habit was carried on in the Conciliar Movement when Ger-

1. Figgis, From Gerson to Grotius, p. 159.

2. Figgis, Churches in the Modern State, "Respublica Christiana," p. 215.

son and others (also with the Aristotelian ideal in mind) did some significant thinking about political societies. This step was in the direction of thinking of churches as one among political societies, "one society" in a "two society" state, one group in a "communitas communitatum." Figgis's only reference to even earlier "two society" thinking is a reference to the period of persecution of Christians by the Romans:

When it (the conception of a religious society as distinct from the State) did dawn upon some men's minds, what was the universal response? "Christiani ad leones." Sir William Ramsay has made it clear that the persecution of the early church was a matter of policy, and that it was directed against this very notion, the claim to be a separate society, while still remaining Roman citizens. It was the Church as upholding "a new non-Roman unity" that men feared.¹

The "two society" movement, which had reached nothing more than the court-
ing stage with the Conciliar Movement, is seen to disappear from the scene, for all practical purposes, after Warburton.

Warburton...developes explicitly and in set terms, in his Alliance between Church and State, the doctrine that the two are independent organisms consisting of the same individuals, but existing for different ends, each to be treated as a "corporate personality." His theory comes at the end, not at the beginning of the development I have been describing...²

The death of this development came at the hands of the "damnosa hereditas," the powerful "single society" tendency in history which does not abide the life of a competing or even companion society alongside that of the unitary state.

In presenting a brief history of "single society" thinking, Figgis

1. Ibid., p. 202.

2. Ibid., p. 218.

attempts to show that viewing the state as a "single society" is not a modern political phenomenon but dates back to pre-Christian times.

Back to Plato go all those high conceptions of the unity of civic society which value it as the ideal, and would sacrifice all or nearly all to that end.¹

It must not be forgotten that in the ideal system which rose out of the Greek City-State the fact of the family as a real entity disappears; and Plato would allow a community in wives.²

The conception of a religious society as distinct from the State had not dawned upon the unified civilisation of Greece and Rome.³

The primitive church was a society distinct from the Roman state, and for that reason the church was persecuted. It was only with Constantine that persecution ceased, and that, because he and his followers succeeded in absorbing the one social unit, the church, which had insisted unto martyrdom on a degree of real independence. The "single society" had triumphed again.

After Constantine granted the peace of the Church, it was not long, at most three-quarters of a century, before the old conception ruled again of a great unity in which civil and ecclesiastical powers were merely separate departments. ... finally the Catholics conquered under Theodosius the Great. Arianism was made a crime; Paganism was suppressed; and the world was ripe for that confusion of baptism and citizenship which ruled the Middle Ages. True, there were many struggles between the different authorities, and their issues varied with time and place. But neither emperors nor prelates were treated as rulers of rival societies. The Code of Justinian was compiled subsequently to the De Civitate Dei of St. Augustine. The whole spirit of both tends to identify Church and State, although nei-

1. J. N. Figgis, "Ideal Politics," The English Church Review, V (1914), pp. 487-496. (A lecture delivered at the vacation term of Biblical Study for Women on July 28, 1914).

2. Figgis, Churches in the Modern State, p. 73.

3. Ibid., "Respublica Christiana," p. 202.

ther quite realised this.¹

One of the last pieces of work which Figgis undertook was the delivery of the Pringle Stewart Lectures at Oxford in 1918. With the final revision of the lectures having been made by a Mirfield associate after Figgis's death, they were published in 1921, under the title: The Political Aspects of Augustine's City of God. The book deals with Augustine's very determining effect on the body of political thought during and following his time.

Figgis makes it very clear that he appreciates the fact that De Civitate Dei is first and foremost Christian apologetic and theological:

It is not a treatise on polity whether ecclesiastical or civil.² Nevertheless, he assures his readers, the work had great implications for political thought. He also fully appreciates the fact that Augustine did not identify the "Civitas terrena" with the state and "Civitas Dei" with the church.

The primary distinction is always between two societies, the body of the "reprobate" and the "communio sanctorum"; not between Church and State. ... On earth these two bodies are intermingled, and always will be. Only partly and for certain purposes is the "Civitas terrena" represented by any earthly polity. The Church represents the "Civitas Dei" by symbol rather than by identification. ... All earthly distinctions are but the symbols, never adequate, of the final grouping into sheep and goats. Members of either body are found, and always will be found, in the terrene representative of the other.³

1. Figgis, Churches in the Modern State, "Respublica Christiana," pp. 203-204.

2. J. N. Figgis, The Political Aspects of Saint Augustine's City of God, (London, Longmans, Green and Co., 1921), p. 29.

3. Ibid., pp. 50-52.

Augustine goes out of his way to say that kings and princes cannot make the City of God, which comes by the calling of souls.this non-political interpretation of the symbolic kingdom is seen to be that which is in accordance with the mind of St. Augustine, if we take the book as a whole. ... Augustine does not think of the civil and ecclesiastical authorities as two coordinate powers occupied in governing. Even in dream he had not the great vision of medieval imagination, the one commonwealth of Catholic Christians, with its twin heads of Pope and Emperor.¹

But if the medieval Church-State were not Augustine's dream, Figgis contends that, nevertheless, such a commonwealth of Catholic Christians was the product of Augustine's influence. Figgis does not go quite as far as Gierke, who claimed that the logical development of the Augustinian doctrine was the Bull "Unan Sanctum," the complete subjection of the state to the church, although he does single out certain aspects of Augustine's thought which make such an interpretation tenable. Whether or not the medieval Church-State with the balance of authority on the side of the priestly officers was an altogether logical development, it was the practical result of "Dei Civitas Dei." The work is seen, therefore, to be an important link in the continuing chain of "one society" thought.

Speaking summarily of the history of the "single society" concept, Figgis writes:

In its modern form it goes through the medieval canonists to Renaissance thinkers like Bodin, thence through Hobbes and the supporters of Divine Right to Austin.²

And from Austin the modern world fell heir to that prevailing theory of sovereignty which, to Figgis's mind, was the "damnosa hereditas" from the Civil

1. *Ibid.*, pp. 74-76.

2. Figgis, Churches in the Modern State, "Respublica Christiana," p. 195.

Law of the Roman Empire, of which Stubbs once said that:

whenever it had been dominant, it destroyed any real idea of civil and religious freedom.¹

Attention will soon be turned to Figgis's concern with modern times as involved in the "single society" and "two society" struggle, freedom being threatened by the "single society" presuppositions and safeguarded only as the "two society" or "communitas communitatum" approach succeeds in taking the field of politics and law.

Thus ends that part of this discussion which, under the general heading of the third, the anti-Austinian stage of Figgis's political thought, examines his historical works as evidencing this anti-Austinian trend and his predilection for the "communitas communitatum" approach to things political and legal.

No account of Figgis's political-historical works would be complete as even dealt with in brief without mention of the subjects of natural law and theory of contract on one hand and the problem of ethics in the realm of politics on the other. Before attention is turned to the application of his major political emphasis to the problems of church and state, reference shall be made to these subjects, presenting themselves as they do in the broad span of his political writing.

In The Divine Right of Kings and in From Gerson to Grotius and in the writings which surround these two major works, the reader comes repeatedly upon Figgis's objection to the theory of the "original contract," the device used almost invariably by political thinkers in the often unsuccessful

1. Ibid., p. 226.

ful effort

to set bounds to the "parvenu" and overweening renascence State.¹

Chief among the failings of the theory of original contract, according to Figgis, is its tendency to reduce the state to a mechanical instrument that may be destroyed and manufactured afresh with ease on the occasion of the breach of contract. It fails to appreciate what the theory of The Divine Right of Kings realized: that the state has an organic character, a quality of life, the power of internal development, and that instead of being a necessary evil, political society is natural to man and government and obedience are necessities of human nature.

The logical issue of the popular theory is to treat the state as a lifeless creation of the popular will with no power of development and with no source of strength in sentiment or tradition. No theory of government was ever more untrue to the facts of life than is that of Locke, and the difference between him and Filmer in this respect is all in favour of the latter.²

Furthermore, original contract thinking is unhistorical:

Not only does history afford no evidence of it, but of even a tacit contract the general consciousness in our own or any other age is unaware.³

Figgis admires the profundity of deeper-thinking Jesuits like Suarez and Molina, who stand out among the theorists of popular sovereignty as evolving sovereign power from a community

...by the mere fact of its existence without any deliberate pact, thus preparing the way for the true theory of corporations, in which authority and self-dependence are inherent essentially, and not dependent on any agreement, since they arise

1. Figgis, From Gerson to Grotius, pp. 120-121.

2. Figgis, The Divine Right of Kings, 2nd ed.; p. 252.

3. Figgis, From Gerson to Grotius, p. 129.

from the nature of the case.¹

With Suarez and Molina political power is the inevitable result of the determination of men to live in a society. In fact political authority arises out of the nature of a community as such. It is a contradiction in terms to talk of joining a community and giving it no power. If men live in a community, the community must essentially possess certain powers of organization. In other words a corporate body is something more than the sum of its members.²

These men thus avoided faults common to the propagators of the original compact. They avoided the artificial as well as the unhistorical approach, whereby governmental authority was thought to be the product of an actual decision of men at a particular time to surrender certain of their rights by deliberate choice.³

They also avoided the individualistic approach whereby the life of any social group is limited to being thought of in terms of the lives of the individual members who compose it, with no life or personality recognized in the social unit as such.

Another major objection, according to Figgis, to the conception of the original contract is that it does not face ~~up to~~ the idea of sovereignty.

If government is the result of a contract, what can make the contract binding, when there is "ex hypothesi" no sovereign authority to do so?⁴

1. Ibid., p. 177.

2. Ibid., pp. 154-155.

3. Figgis points out that monastic orders may have been in part the cause of artificial and unhistorical theories about the state: "The artificial theory of the State may have owed something of its prevalence to those bodies, in some respects states in themselves, which did arise by deliberate choice and contrivance." Figgis, The Divine Right of Kings, 2nd ed.; p. 155.

4. Figgis, From Gerson to Grotius, p. 129.

Austin shows how untenable is the notion, that a compact can be binding with no sovereign to enforce it. ... The theory that government and obedience result from a binding compact could only be credited by men, who instinctively regarded law as anterior to the state.¹

Law was indeed thought to be anterior to the state, and natural law especially was seen to be the real basis and authority of all laws by the early supporters of popular rights. This was especially true of the Jesuits by whom law is regarded not so much as dependent on the will of the law giver, as an attempt to realize under political conditions of natural law, the ideal to which all states should conform and to ensure the reign of general utility and justice. Natural law was considered to be anterior to positive law; the power which made promises binding was, therefore, anterior to positive rules and as such provided the necessary background to theories of original contract.

The fundamental basis of the whole system of Grotius is the claim that men are in a society bound together by a natural law which makes promises binding. This is also at the root of the doctrine of the original contract.²

The stress laid upon natural law made it possible to conceive of a state of society in which contract had binding force, though positive law did not exist. This seems nonsense to us, as Austin showed.³

So closely allied were the concepts of the original contract and natural

1. Figgis, *The Divine Right of Kings*, 2nd ed.; pp. 244-245. It is interesting to note here that Figgis objects to original contract because it recognizes no sovereign to enforce it, both in his major work which preceded and in his major work which followed the revolution in his thought. Perhaps it is indicative of a remark Figgis made: "As a mere verbal theory I do not know that this view of sovereign power is assailable." Figgis, *Churches in the Modern State*, p. 41.

3. Figgis, *From Gerson to Grotius*, p. 186.

law in the sixteenth and seventeenth century apologies for limitations upon absolute state sovereignty, one might expect Figgis to find the latter sharing many of the shortcomings of the former, which he did.

The advocates of natural law were also unhistorical in their approach. They spoke in terms of an unhistorical state of nature. Besides being unhistorical, such an effort to find an immutable doctrine of government runs amuck of one of Figgis's favorite themes:

No system of politics can be immutable. It is impossible in framing a doctrine of government to lay down eternal principles, which may never be transgressed. A Universal theory of the state is a chimaera, for historical development and national character are the most important of all considerations in investigating the laws of political development.¹

Natural law theorists also missed the true idea of sovereignty:

One side (the believers in the supremacy of law) has ever before it this vision conceived as a system existing by Divine Right, its origin lost in the past, independent of circumstances and men's caprice, superior to Kings, and controlling Parliament. The other side lays stress on the conception of a sovereign raised above all laws with power to abrogate them, who alone can give binding force to enactments and invest custom with legal sanctions.²

Along the same line, Figgis accuses the advocates of natural law of confusing law positive and law natural. To say that positive decrees of the law-giver are not law because they are not in harmony with natural law is simply to overlook the facts.

Although Figgis consistently looked upon the theories of original contract and natural law as deserving of most every possible objection, that of being unhistorical, oblivious to the meaning of sovereignty, as well as

1. Figgis, The Divine Right of Kings, 2nd ed.; p. 153.

2. Ibid., p. 233.

abstract and doctrinal, yet in From Gerson to Grotius he is more tolerant, understanding, and appreciative of the work of these related theories.

The idea of contract did serve to put necessary limits on the sovereign power and to place civil rights on a firmer basis than that of royal grant:

The claim of kings, who had recognized the significance of sovereignty, was not so much to thwart the actual exercise of the national customs, as to claim that they were matters of grace not of right. It is against this claim that the idea of a contract proved so valuable--for it gave to the public the consciousness that their rights were no less rooted in the constitution of the country than were those of the king.¹

It is not surprising to discover a certain regard for the theory of contract in Figgis's later writings, for as he pointed out in both The Divine Right of Kings and in From Gerson to Grotius, the theory of contract was a legacy from the days of medieval feudalism. Medieval feudalism, in turn, was exemplary of much that the advocates of the "Genossenschaftsrecht" theory were trying to recapture, important among its virtues being the recognition that certain basic rights are to be enjoyed not only as a grant from the sovereign power. This idea was carried into the newer world of politics through the medium of original contract thinking.

Nor was the idea of natural law to be scorned altogether. Not only did natural law form the necessary background for the original contract; it was also the foundation stone of international law.

The basis of both the original contract and international law is the same. Both ideas have their necessary roots in the belief in the law of nature. Only so in those days could the idea of

1. Figgis, From Gerson to Grotius, p. 135.

right be justified against reason of state.¹

Through the original contract in intra-state affairs and through international law in inter-state affairs, natural law served to put right before utility in both spheres. Right could only be justified by legality in the days when men were primarily of a legalistic mind and found it inconceivable that a thing could be legally wrong and morally right. While Figgis thought it wrong not to be able to rebel on moral grounds, yet he did say:

The confusion between ethics and law may be erroneous from the theoretical, yet from the practical standpoint, their entire separation was equally dangerous. It was sense, that law was in its nature more than a mere command, that it implied justice and a right recognised but not created by it.²

Figgis would be largely at one with Ernest Barker's expression of the need to look upon law as both the historical product of the life of a people and as in need of being built around a core of justice.

...it is not enough to hold that law is simply an historical product, evolved in this or that direction, under this or that set of contingencies, by this or that peculiar people. To hold such a view is to be content with a law which is merely an empirical fact, and has no anchor in the flux of history. Social thought, as it operates in time, is indeed a basis of justice; but the mind of man will always demand that the core of justice shall be beyond time and space--"quod semper, quod ubique." The Natural School of Law had some sense of that timeless and spaceless core. That is why, as Gierke writes in a noble passage of his work on Althusius, the undying spirit of Natural Law can never be extinguished.³

In turning to Figgis's view of the place of ethics in state-

1. *Ibid.*, p. 135.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

3. Gierke, trans. by Barker, *op. cit.*, p. 1 (roman numeral).

craft, it is understood from what has gone before that he had high regard for those elements in the theories of original contract and natural law which held up an ethical code which was not at the mercy of pure utilitarianism. Writing early in his first book on political thought, he recognizes his own time as:

An age in which all political theory is confessedly utilitarian.¹ Certain in his own mind that liberty does not long survive in the atmosphere of political utilitarianism, Figgis points to a militant concern for the inalienable rights of human character, historically championed by religious bodies, as the only effective antidote for the utilitarianism that rides roughshod over persons in the name of efficiency:

It can hardly be said that any of the religious bodies really believed liberty as we conceive it - but they believed in the transcendent importance of character as moulded by their own religious system. For this reason and this reason only was it impossible for them to be overcome by the general trend in favour of despotism and the utilitarian arguments of writers like Barclay, who asked whether any suffering caused by a tyrant was equal to that of civil war. The answer is in the negative, and it is only as liberty is seen to have its true approval in the inalienable right of human character to be its best that there were or ever will be adequate defence against the claim of organization to consider only efficiency in the desire of administrators to think of order before righteousness.²

Figgis, though fully cognizant of all the dangers inherent in the thought of Nietzsche, yet admired Nietzsche's scorn of mere utilitarianism.

From the mean streets of modern civilization he calls men to

1. Figgis, The Divine Right of Kings, 2nd ed.; p. 12.

2. J. N. Figgis, Christianity and History, (London, James Finch & Co., Ltd., 1905), pp. 69-70.

Alpine heights of danger and triumph, despising above all things utilitarian democracy and the optimism of inevitable progress, with its gospel of the sofa-millennium.¹

In comparing Acton with Maitland and Creighton, Figgis singles Acton out for his complete rejection of utilitarian morals:

Less suggestive than Creighton, less enthralling than Maitland, less humorous and unexpected than either, he excelled them in moral passion and dignity and weight of eloquence. No one could listen to him without being convinced of the tremendous issues which lie in political choice, or of the absolute difference between right and wrong doing. It was this burning conviction of the eternal distinction between good and bad, and the immeasurable gulf that divides expedience from justice, that gave to his lectures, his writing, and his life their peculiar significance. His whole life was, in fact, a protest against the principles of Machiavelli--that is, of purely utilitarian morals, whether in Church or State.²

It is interesting, however, that in the dispute which arose between Acton and Creighton following the publication of Creighton's second two volumes on the Papacy, Figgis sided with Creighton in allowing statesmen the defects of their qualities, in allowing certain stratagems of diplomacy in a state of things bordering on war to protect the rights of national individuality, and in judging the morality of an act according to the prevailing ethic of the age which was the setting for any given act. Creighton gave expression to his more or less lenient view in the third and fourth volumes on the History of the Papacy. Acton expressed his opposition to these views in an article in "The English Historical Review" and in a personal letter to Creighton.

1. J. N. Figgis, The Will to Freedom or The Gospel of Nietzsche and The Gospel of Christ, (London, Longmans, Green and Co., 1917), p. 92.

2. Figgis, Churches in the Modern State, pp. 258-259.

In the letter he wrote:

I really don't know whether you accept them (people in authority) because of their rank, or of success and power, or of their date. The chronological plea may have some little value in a limited sphere of instances. It does not allow of our saying that such a man did not know right from wrong, unless we were able to say that he lived before Columbus, before Copernicus, and could not know right from wrong. ...I cannot accept your canon that we are able to judge Pope and King unlike other men, with a favourable presumption that they did no wrong. ... There is no worse heresy than that the office sanctifies the holder of it. You would hang a man of no position like Ravallac, but if what one hears is true, then Elizabeth asked the gaoler to murder Mary and William III ordered his Scots minister to exterminate a clan. Here are the greatest names coupled with the greatest crimes; you would spare these criminals for some mysterious reason. I would hang them higher than Haman, for reasons of quite obvious justice, still more, still higher for the sake of historical science. The inflexible integrity of the moral code is to me, the secret of the authority, the dignity, the utility of history. If we may debase the currency for the sake of genius, or success, or rank, or reputation, we may debase it for the sake of a man's influence, of his religion, of his party, of the good cause which prospers by his credit and suffers by his disapproval. Then history ceases to be a science, an arbiter of controversy, a guide of the wanderer, the upholder of that moral standard which the powers of earth and religion itself tend constantly to depress. It serves where it ought to reign; and it serves the worst cause better than the purest.¹

In one of his letters of reply to the objections of Acton, Creighton wrote:

...I admit that I hesitate to find men so villainous as in your scales of moral judgment they would be. I like to stand aside as much as possible, and content myself with the humble part of a chorus in a Greek play. I try to put myself in the place of my personages. I think that in history as in private life, I hope I try to find out man's good qualities before their bad ones, their good intentions before their evil means. The statesman always seems to be in a non-moral position, because he has to do what is possible as well as

1. J. E. E. D. Acton, Historical Essays and Studies, ed. by J. N. Figgis and R. V. Laurence (London, MacMillin and Co., 1908) pp. 504-505.

what is best, and the compromise is necessarily pitiable.¹

Figgis's stand in relation to these opposing views is best expressed in a statement found in his chapter on "Luther and Machiavelli" in

From Gerson to Grotius:

In later days when his smaller works are forgotten, it will probably be found that the most enduring of all Acton's claims to greatness was his passionate insistence on the need of moral law in the lives of nations and Churches, no less than in those of individuals. The protest which he made both in season and out of season on this subject is his real contribution to his time. But along with this there went an absoluteness of statement which the subject will not bear. He too had the defects of his qualities--and in order to ensure that we should not fall into the common error of average humanity and condone too readily the crimes of statesmen because they were successful, or those of Churchmen, because they were sincere; he sweeps into one net of indiscriminate and unrelieved condemnation Newman and Fenelon, Rosmini and Dupanloup, and prophesies for them with certainty a future, of which he will not even profess to be assured in regard to the vilest and most criminal of mankind. With a deep reverence for the utteror of these condemnations, and for the general principles that guided him, I cannot but think that this extremity of overstatement injures the very causes he desired to promote and has a tendency to make it the ground of the too easy and too lasting victory of Machiavelli, over all his adversaries. In human judgment it is, I think, undoubted that the statesman and the ecclesiastic must be allowed to have the defects of their qualities. While we are never to assert that these defects are merits (which is to justify Machiavelli) or that they ought not to have been avoided; or that right ought not to rule in politics as elsewhere; we are bound to admit that amid the innumerable temptations to which human nature is prone, there are certain more peculiarly dangerous to every condition of life, and that in considering the conduct of our fellows, we should be less rigid to those faults, whatever they may be, which are natural and incident to their position.²

This whole discussion is of special interest not only because any state-

1. Selections from the Correspondence of the First Lord Acton, ed. by J.N.Figgis and R. Laurence, I (Longmans, Green and Co., London, 1917), pp. 309-310.

2. Figgis, From Gerson to Grotius, pp. 90-91.

ment by Figgis regarding things ethical has a close bearing on his religious thought, but also because it shows Figgis expressing himself in relation to the thought of Creighton and Acton, two of the men who had the greatest influence on his own thought.

CHAPTER III

FIGGIS AS A POLITICAL THINKER

"A Plea for the Group Person"
(Continued)

There is a sense in which all that has gone before in this discussion of Figgis as a political thinker has been a preparation for what is to follow. It has formed the necessary background for the consideration of his thought about the relations between church and state and the problem of authority in church life and in the life of the Church of England in particular.

The reader of Figgis's historical works recognizes that he is on familiar ground when he comes upon the following sentences in the first chapter, of "A Free Church in a Free State," in the author's Churches in the Modern State, the main body of which book was delivered in the form of lectures to the clergy in Gloucester in June 1911:

What really concerns us is...whether or no it (a religious body) be conceived as possessing any living power of self-development, or whether it is conceived either as a creature of the State, or if allowed a private title is to be held rigidly under the trust-deeds of her foundation, thereby enslaved to the dead. Not indeed that all change should be taken as admissible, but that those changes sanctioned by the constitutional authority of the Church, and declared by them to be in accordance with the spirit of their society, should be accepted as such by the Courts, and no further question asked. In other words, is the life of the society to be conceived as inherent or derived? Does the Church exist by some inward living force, with powers of self-development like a person; or is she a mere aggregate, a fortuitous concourse of ecclesiastical atoms, treated it may be as one for purposes of convenience, but with no real claim to a mind or will of her own, except so far as the civil power sees good to invest her for the nonce with a fiction of

unity?¹

The "damnosa hereditas," the "single society," the doctrine of the single uniform all-absorbing power, the unlimited power of the law-giver in the state deduced from the notion of its unity, the Roman theory of sovereignty which in England found its classical expression in John Austin, with its entire distinction between public and private whereby no corporate life can be pleaded against its authority, is seen to be wrecking its havoc on the relations between church and state in Figgis's day. Figgis saw the legal minds of his time to be captives of those theories about sovereignty and law which he had come to recognize as abstract and theoretic, inconsistent with the facts of social life, and dangerous to and destructive of freedom. The result was that they did not recognize the church as an independent entity and refuted any claim on the part of the church to an inherent life of her own.

When we find English secular lawyers in the twentieth century endeavoring to decide between legitimate and illegitimate "developments" of the Westminster Confession, we feel ourselves almost like Alice in Wonderland. Only it is the wonderland of fact--that strangest of all realities, the legal mind.²

Here Figgis is referring specifically to the case of the Free Church of Scotland Appeals, which, for him, was the modern example "par excellent" of the lawyers' adherence to Austinianism and their concomitant oblivion to the inherent rights of group life and in particular the group life of the church. This Scottish case was a

1. Figgis, Churches in the Modern State, pp. 39-40.

2. Figgis, Ibid., p. 35.

favourite subject with Figgis, frequently referred to in his books and, according to his associates, a frequent topic of conversation. The Free Church, which grew out of the Disruption of 1843, had voted to join with the United Presbyterians. The union was resisted ^{a minority in the Free Church} by the ~~"Wee Frees,"~~ who said the amalgamation was "ultra vires." They claimed that the rigid Calvinistic doctrine of the formularies of the Free Church were being loosely interpreted and that the identity of the Free Church in the United Free Church would be lost. They alleged also that Chalmers and those of his group had declared that they were in favour of the principle of Establishment and that, therefore, the voluntarism of the United Presbyterians was contrary to the original intent and purpose of the ^{Free Church} ~~"Wee Frees."~~ The "Wee Frees" won their case. The active union was on these grounds condemned as "ultra vires" by the House of Lords, and all the property of the Free Church was declared to belong to the small group of the ~~"Wee Frees."~~¹ As a result of widespread opposition, however, an Act of Parliament was passed whereby an equitable apportionment of property was made between the two groups. In spite of the remedial action taken by Parliament, Figgis insisted that the initial action of the House of Lords revealed the legal mind for what it was: the captive of Austin-

1. It is interesting to note P. T. Forsyth's estimate of the decision: "...it is the most conspicuous instance of the absolutism of the State to be found in the West outside France or Germany. It is the long survival, in a particular instance, of the State paganism of Greece and Rome. It is the worst example of Byzantinism that our recent history has to show." Peter T. Forsyth, Theology in Church and State, (London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1915), p. 172.

ian concepts.

This (the Act of Parliament), however, does not alter the fact that the Judgment of the House of Lords expressed the mind of English lawyers on a topic of such importance, and shows us how they would regard all claims to independent life on the part of a religious body.¹

If we try to get behind the judgment to the minds of the judges and the conception of law which dominates them, I think it will be found that its failure to harmonise the facts lies above all in this--that in their view the Church did not exist at all, i.e., the Church as a living social union of men bound together by specific ties, recruited by definite means, and acting by virtue of an inherent spontaneity of life which is not imposed but original, which though it may be regulated by the civil authority is not derived therefrom. That that was the conception of the Kirk in the mind of Chalmers is unquestionable: it is indeed the very irony of fate that a body formed for no other purpose but to maintain a passionate sense of corporate freedom should be declared by the Courts of Law to be lacking in that very quality of spontaneous life which the fathers of the Disruption had gone into the wilderness to assert. Now this conception is not merely the claim of the Scots Free Kirk; it is the notion of every religious sect which claims for itself toleration. None can really admit that its entity is derived from the State.²

Apart from any special or technical points, what we find in this case is that the lawyers refused to consider the body as a Church; i.e., as a society with a principle of inherent life, but bound it rigidly by the dead hand of its original documents... The actual decision could only be paralleled if an English Court had chosen to adjudge all the property of the English Roman Catholics to someone who had refused to submit to the Vatican decrees on the ground that they were "ultra vires," and if the judgment had been given after a discussion in court of the meaning of the creed of Pope Pius V.³

Further evidence of the same bent of the legal mind in its attitude toward the churches was offered by Professor Dicey in his objection to the Divorce Act of 1857 whereby an incumbent is compelled to allow

1. Figgis, Churches in the Modern State, p. 20.

2. Ibid., pp. 36-37.

3. Ibid., p. 33.

the use of his church for the marriage of divorced persons, but he may refuse to perform the ceremony. Figgis quotes Dicey:

"A clergyman of the Church of England is, after all, an official of the national Church; but under the Divorce Act he is allowed to decline to solemnize the marriage of any person whose former marriage has been dissolved on the ground of his or her adultery. Thus a clergyman, while acting as an official of the State, is virtually allowed to pronounce immoral a marriage permitted by the morality of the State."¹

Figgis comments:

It is clear that the writer deprecates the notion that the Christian Church can have a higher law than that of the State; indeed he would appear to go farther and to identify legal with moral right. ... ethics no less than religion is the creature of the State.²

Figgis concedes that part of the problem may arise from the very fact that the Church of England is an established church and that a clergyman of that allegiance is an official of the state. He agrees with that part of Warburton's thought which recognized that an established church does have certain responsibilities to the state and somewhat less freedom from her sway than clergymen having a different allegiance. But he insists that the larger problem is not in the least peculiar to established churches. The Scottish Church case (whereby the state placed its heavy hand on what should have been recognized as the inherent rights of a church not established by law) was strong to support this contention.

It is the boast of the Free Churches in this country that they have secured the recognition of this right (the recognition of their spontaneous life), while we are debarred from it, and in

1. Ibid., pp. 14-15.

2. Ibid., p. 8.

their view justly debarred, by the accident of establishment. But in this case (the Scottish case) shows how illusory is this notion. I think indeed that we must admit that no established Church can claim quite the same liberty as one non-established. But my point is that in the existing state of the law there is no security that either the one or the other will really be allowed this liberty when it comes to the pinch.¹

So long as this doctrine or anything like it be dominant, it would probably be an evil rather than a benefit if the Church of England were to become, what it now is not, a corporation recognised as such by the law.²

Mere disestablishment would not of itself ensure liberty. For this reason I do not wish to discuss the question of disestablishment. At bottom it is irrelevant to the issue. The real problem is the relation of smaller communities to that "communitas communitatum" we call the State, and whether they have an existence of their own or are the mere creatures of the sovereign. It might indeed be true as a matter of fact that disestablishment is the necessary condition in this country of the recognition in the Church of those principles I am trying to set down. But if so, it is mere fact; for in the case of the Established Kirk of Scotland this recognition exists to a large extent, while in certain other cases where a Church is not established it is still without real freedom.³

Figgis was not only an Anglican cleric fighting for the recognition of the rights of the church. Beyond that, he was a political thinker who, on grounds which he thought equally worthy of acceptance by Christian or by non-Christian standards, was making a plea for the recognition of the rights of the church as one among the group-personalities in any given state, the personality each of which must be recognized if any sane view of politics is to be entertained.⁴ In the

1. *Ibid.*, pp. 37-39.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 65.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

4. "Starting from a deep conviction of the spiritual independence of the Church, Dr. Figgis proceeds to a general doctrine of the 'inher-

introduction to Churches in the Modern State, he writes:

The main purpose of the lectures will have been accomplished if I can have persuaded the reader to see that the problem is one which is concerned not with ecclesiastical pretensions so much as with the nature of human life in society.¹

Since, as a fact, religious bodies are only one class of a number of other societies, all laying claim to this inherent life, it is clear that the question concerns not merely ecclesiastical privilege, but the whole complex structure of civil society and the nature of political union. It cannot be too often repeated, that the primary question at issue is no narrow quibble of a few bigoted clergy and ecclesiastically-minded laymen, but has to do with the quality of all persons other than natural persons in the nation. Are corporate societies to be conceived as real personalities or as fictitious ones, i. e., is their union to be throughout of such a nature that it has a life greater than the mere sum of the individuals composing the body; that it is not merely a matter of contract; that in action it has the marks of mind and will which we attribute to personality; that this corporate life and personality grows up naturally and inevitably out of any union of men for permanent ends, and is not withheld or granted at the pleasure of the State?²

...in fighting their own battles religious bodies are fighting the battle of a healthy national life and alone providing the framework under which the perennial social instincts of men can develop, and instead of a scientific monstrosity (that of the omnipotent State facing an equally unreal aggregate of unrelated individuals) we may look for a land covered with every kind of social life, functioning not only in matters religious, intellectual, artistic, but also in the most necessary form of industrial and manufacturing and even agricultural activity, and each receiving its due place as a living member of the body politic, recognised as a real self-developing unity. It is because the ground on which we stand is nothing marrow or mean, but is the only security for true social liberty, and is eminently congruous with English life, that I am persuaded, that however long or bitter is the conflict, victory in the long run is certain.³

ent, self-developing life' of all societies." Barker, introduction to Gierke, op. cit., p. lxxxii.

1. Figgis, Churches in the Modern State, p. ix.

2. Ibid., pp. 40-41.

3. Ibid., p. 51.

Figgis was one, if not chief, among those High Churchmen who pressed the theory of Gierke into a defense of the independence of ecclesiastical societies. The above quotes, however, give considerable cogency to the assertion that he was pleading the recognition of the rights of groups on a broader basis than that of his High Churchmanship. His interest in Guild Socialism, a completely non-church-related ramification of Gierke's thought, is further evidence of his concern with the recognition of group personality as a political thinker, a social theorist, and not simply as a member of one group within the Church of England. A further case in point is the fact that Gierke's thought and its relevance for English social life was introduced to Figgis through Maitland, a man who "distrusted all religious organizations."¹ Speaking of the political writings of Gierke, Figgis writes:

The value of all these books is the greater for our purpose that they are in no sense ecclesiastical in tone and that the English introduction (referring to Maitland's introduction to his translation of a portion of Gierke's Das Deutsche Genossenschaftsrecht) was the work of one who described himself as a "dissenter from all Churches."²

Figgis also strives to make it clear that wherein he is making his plea for right political thinking as a churchman, it is not as one identified with the High Church Party or even as a member of the Church of England. In the Preface to Churches in the Modern State, he makes this comment in explanation of the book's title:

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1. Ibid., p. 264. (Appendix II)
 2. Ibid., p. 56.

The word "Churches" in the title page is used without any theological prejudices to denote religious bodies of any particular kind.¹

Although the church was seen by Figgis to be fighting a common cause with all groups within the state which insist on the recognition of their own personality and the rights which stem from that personality, yet the church does have, even as she did have historically, an especially important role to play in winning the day for freedom. A recurrent emphasis in From Gerson to Grotius was that:

Political liberty, as a fact in the modern world, is the result of the struggle of religious organisms to live. Religious forces, and religious forces alone, have had sufficient influence to ensure practical realisation for political ideas.²

Throughout the struggle of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, it was the right of their own church to exist as a trainer of character which drove Jesuits, Huguenots, Puritans, and Dutchmen to become often in spite of themselves the promoters of liberty; and found perhaps its completest expression in the "volteface" of the Anglican clergy which alone made possible the revolution of 1688. For all these men character was bound up with religious system; many of them did not greatly care for and some of them definitely disapproved of religious and political liberty. But they were one and all driven to fight for the existence of that society, whatever it was, which was for them the true home of the spirit, and which could alone direct it to the highest ends. This they did in spite of all theories of the risks of rebellion, or the evils of anarchy, and sometimes in astonishing contradiction to the principles which in other spheres they maintained. It is perhaps true to say, not that civil liberty is the child of religious liberty, but that liberty, whether civil or religious, was the work often reluctantly, sometimes unconsciously, undertaken by communities of men who had an end higher than political, who refused to submit religion to political arguments, who fought for ends never

1. Ibid., p. viii.

2. Figgis, From Gerson to Grotius, p. 5.

entirely utilitarian.¹

Figgis saw that utilitarian arguments for liberty as such are not powerful to serve the cause of freedom. Utilitarianism lends itself more readily to an apology for tyranny than for freedom on the ground that suffering under the worst of tyrants may be preferable to that produced by insurrection. The most potent argument for freedom is:

the (insistence on the) right of human nature to reach the noblest.²

In insisting that they be allowed to continue to provide the atmosphere which to their minds was best suited to develop the highest character, churches were the most potent force in obtaining toleration and freedom not only for themselves but for all.

Figgis challenges the churches in one sense to be in the twentieth century what they had been in the seventeenth, the soldiers in the front ranks of freedom's battleline, fighting for their right to exist as a church. In so doing they are fighting for the rights of all groups to exist on their own merits and are, at the same time, contending for individual liberty which is historically, according to Figgis's thesis, a by-product of corporate freedom. But even though the church can contribute most to freedom by being the church in the truest sense, yet Figgis would urge upon all churchmen, as he urged upon the clergy of Gloucester when delivering Churches in the Modern

1. Ibid., p. 108.

2. Ibid., p. 107.

State in lecture form, a keener awareness of the political aspect of their position and of the common cause they have with all who would establish a healthy society.

One of the controversial outgrowths of Figgis's insistence on the right of the church to live its own life without the state's infringing upon its personality is his like assertion that the church has no right to dictate to the state.

Insisting that neither the individual Christian nor the church as a corporate body has the right to impose Christian morality upon those who owe no allegiance to Christ or His Church, Figgis asserts that the impact of the church upon the community must be through the leavening influence of churchmen who take their Christianity and its ethic seriously.

What I am anxious to emphasize is that, primarily, the business of Christians is with the moral standard of their own society and with themselves as its members. The raising of that will gradually bring about the elevation of the great mass of those who do not belong to it. So long as Churchmen do not see, except in a few matters, such as Sunday observance and sexual morality, any real reason why they should have any higher standard than the world at large, so long is the Christian Church failing in its mission. ... We want an enormously heightened public opinion ~~within~~ the Church, and then it is bound to affect the world at large.¹

Addressing the congregation of All Saints' Church, Margaret Street, London, in 1910, Figgis sounded the challenge to the individual Christian as "separated unto the Gospel," as a member of the church which is meant to be "an holy nation, a peculiar people," and also as

1. Figgis, Churches in the Modern State, pp. 129-130.

identified with the church of the upper middle class:

...we need even more closely to ask ourselves personally the question? What do I mean when I speak of myself as "separated unto the Gospel"? Am I, indeed, being crucified with Christ? What difference does it make to me that I am a member of this wonderful company, the general assembly and Church of the firstborn? Do I get and do I spend my income differently from my neighbour over the way, who calls himself an agnostic or something else? I think some of the talk about social reform has done harm. It is directing many people's minds to the gigantic evils of Western civilisation, evils so gigantic that but few see any way to cure them, and those few must wait years before anything can be done, while their minds are diverted from the more practical question of what they are doing with their own opportunities. How are their dependents treated? What are their relations to servants? How many of your servants are allowed to break down by overwork and want of proper rest?¹

H. M. Relton, who speaks of an indebtedness to Gierke, Maitland, and Figgis, makes a comment Figgis would have recognized as expressing his own mind:

It is well recognized that at the time of Constantine the "world" got into the church and has never since been out of it. If the world is indifferent to the church it is because the church is so little different from the world; and the first step to attaining an effective influence over the world is through dissociation from the assumptions and habits which prevail in the world.²

Figgis's strong conviction about the church's "hands off" policy towards the state comes home with particular force when one reads of his assertion that the church should not presume so much as to instruct the state on legislation relating to marriage and divorce.

We need to have it perfectly clear that ...

...any change in the law of the land (toward increasing the facilities for divorce) shall leave entirely unchanged the

1. Figgis, Religion and English Society, (London, Longmans, Green and Co., 1911), p. 46.

2. H. Maurice Relton, Religion and the State, (London, John Heritagage, 1937), p. 148.

freedom of the Church to insist on the observance of the Christian law of marriage by all her communicating members, and to exclude all who do not. But as Churchmen we are not bound to go further.¹

All that Figgis will allow the Christian to ask of the state is legislation which is generally acceptable apart from a plea in the name of the Christian faith:

I am not saying that every individual among us might not vote or write against such proposals; he may object to them as a change, or because they have this laxity in America, or for its effect on the children, or because it is only a fad of a few of the rich, or because indissoluble marriage is affirmed by the law of nature, and so forth. But he ought not to be asked to oppose them on grounds of loyalty to the Church;²

Favourable as most of Figgis's readers were to the general thesis of his work, many were critical of his development of his thesis to the point where the concurrence of the positivist or some equally non-Christian school is required before a Christian may take a stand on a moral issue regarding state action. In a letter to the Church Times, a rather representative voice is given to that criticism:

..we may remark that Dr. Figgis here seems to forget what he has elsewhere emphasized--that the common ground to agnostics and Christians is rapidly suffering erosion under the waves of recent ethical criticism of Christianity, and that it is therefore very hazardous to rely on it as a foundation for any common moral action. And too, such action would be extremely limited in scope, for these conditions would apparently not allow a Christian (according to Dr. Figgis) to resist a movement such as "reform" of the divorce law, of which the real object is sexual promiscuity.

The notion that Christians in their capacity of citizens can be content with advocating a sort of "reduced" Christian morality is in fact exactly parallel to the old and exploded idea that

1. Figgis, Churches in the Modern State, p. 121.
2. Ibid., pp. 124-125.

there are such things as natural religion and undemonination-
alism onto which revealed religion and definite church teaching
can respectively be clapped as superstructures. Dr. Figgis
would, I imagine, repudiate these ideas... Yet he is ap-
parently prepared to accept the analogous and highly unsatis-
factory distinction between Natural Ethics and Christian
Ethics, and to allow that the Christian may - nay, must - act
in politics only according to the former.¹

There is a fundamental difference between Figgis's thought
regarding the relation of church and state, church and community, and
the thought of a number of men in Great Britain who, in recent years,
have given significant attention to this problem as accentuated by the
grim realities in the world and within national communities during the
years including and surrounding World War II which compel thinking
churchmen to examine wherein the church has failed that these things
should have come to pass, to rethink the church's position with regard
to the community in general and the state in particular. Such men as
T. S. Eliot, John Baillie, and Alec Vidler are all of a mind that the
church and her members have a definite Christian obligation to God for
the community and that to keep the faith and to preserve the Christian
community, however loosely the term has to be defined if it is to des-
cribe the modern English state, a Christian claim must be made upon that
community.

It must therefore be said, in season and out of season, that a
Church to be worthy of the name, however small a minority it
may be in any given society, is charged with the responsibility
of bearing testimony to God's sovereignty and God's will before
kings and rulers and the whole people. It must declare man's
civic duties as well as his ecclesiastical duties. It must
teach the Law of God, as well as preach the Gospel of God. It

1. J. G. Walker, Church Times, "Dr. Figgis and Christian Morality,"
(letter which appeared in the Correspondence Section) pp. 36-37.

must denounce injustice and sin wherever they are to be found, and call upon all men to repent and return unto the Lord their God by obeying His law in their common life.¹

There is a general agreement among these writings, according to Mr. Eliot's expression, that "Christianity is communal before being individual."² Dr. Baillie develops this theme in the context of the doctrine of baptism:

The insight enshrined in this doctrine and practice is that the most likely way to bring men to an individual decision for Christ is to nurture them within a Christian community. This community is in the first place the family, and hence the controversy has always revolved round the baptism of infants born to Christian parents. But it is necessary that something of the same principle should be extended also to those larger social units in which, as the child grows to adolescence and manhood, he finds himself increasingly involved; and this is all the more necessary in a day like our own, when the family unfortunately counts for so much less in adolescent life than it used to do.

Just, therefore, as it is wrong to think meanly of the Christianity of children before they reach the age of personal decision and are confirmed in the faith, so I believe it wrong to hold as of no account the Christianity which prevades the life of a community before it is confirmed in the personal decision of every individual citizen.³

Interesting expression is given to Mr. Eliot's insistence on Christianity's responsibility for the community as his thesis comes face to face with the problem of the non-Christian statesman:

What the rulers believed, would be less important than the beliefs to which they would be obliged to conform. And a skeptical or indifferent statesman, working within a Christian frame, might be more effective than a devout Christian statesman obliged to conform to a secular frame. For he would be re-

1. Vidler, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

2. T. S. Eliot, The Idea of Christian Society, (London, Faber and Faber Limited, 1939), p. 59.

3. John Baillie, What is Christian Civilization?, (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1945), p. 35.

quired to design his policy for the government of a Christian society.¹

Pointing up the whole contrast between the three who have been singled out and Figgis is a statement by Figgis wherein he is seen to retire before that same figure, referred to by Eliot, of the non-Christian statesman. Rather than to entertain the hope or even postulate the ideal of a community in which the community's temper, constantly nourished by a community-minded church, would compel a certain conformity to a Christian standard, he writes:

One of the ~~under~~-secretaries of His Majesty's Government is a person who varies his defence of Liberalism with public and repeated denials of the historic fact of our Lord's existence; and when he has spoken of Him, does so in terms of which the following is a specimen: "Some of the sayings attributed to Jesus have a relatively high moral value." Such a man has every right to his place in the modern State; but what guidance can the law of the Christian Church be as to what shall be the wisest law to make in a society of which such people are the rulers? What may be the wisest rule for a nation so heterogeneously composed we cannot from the Christian standpoint positively say, and we shall probably differ greatly from one another.²

The fundamental difference between the approach of Figgis and those like him and that of Eliot, Baillie, Vidler, and those sharing their thoughts is explained in part by the fact that Figgis assumed from his observations that the church had returned to a minority position of the kind it had not known since the early church, and that the twentieth century civilization which surrounds the church is no more Christian than was the pre-Constantine Roman State.

1. Eliot, op. cit., p. 28.

2. Figgis, Churches in the Modern State, p.122.

Figgis was a student of his age in many aspects of its expression, and the more he saw, the more he was confirmed in his rather pessimistic estimate of the century in which he was living. The inroads of secularism, the treating of people as means to an end rather than ends in themselves, the ridiculing of holiness even as an ideal, the dropping off in church attendance, the largely anti-Christian, even on the ethical side, atmosphere in literature and art, novels and dramas, newspapers and reviews, the loss of adhesion to the ancient faith among the intellectuals (including the universities), as well as among the general public, in their cumulative effect brought him to this conclusion:

...it is truer to say that Christianity runs counter to our civilisation than that it fulfils its.¹

C. F. G

Figgis quotes ^{C. F. G} Mr. Masterman and is in complete agreement with him:

"It is the passing of a whole civilisation away from the faith in which it was founded and out of which it has been fashioned."²

Again in Figgis's words:

I should say there are no longer grounds for believing that the Western World is Christian now in a sense in which it was not in the period immediately preceding the peace of the Church under Constantine the Great.³

1. J. N. Figgis, Civilisation at the Cross Roads (New York, Longmans, Green and Co., 1913), pp. 23-24.

2. Ibid., (quoting Condition of England,) p. 33.

3. Ibid., pp. 29-30. Figgis is to be identified in large part with the group which Dr. Baillie describes as "....those within Anglicanism, Catholic, and High Church in temper and tracing their descent from one strain of the Oxford Movement, who urge the Church to a much franker recognition of its minority position from an increasingly pagan or merely secularist world." Baillie, op. cit., p. 32.

The other view which, though not minimizing the powerful influence of non-Christian forces, suggests that the pre-Constantine stage has not yet been reached is expressed by Mr. Eliot:

...a society has not ceased to be Christian until it has become positively something else. It is my contention that we have to-day a culture which is mainly negative, but which, so far as it is positive, is still Christian. I do not think that it can remain negative, because a negative culture has ceased to be efficient in a world where economic as well as spiritual forces are proving the efficiency of cultures which, even when pagan, are positive; and I believe that the choice before us is between the formation of a new Christian culture, and the acceptance of a pagan one. Both involve radical changes; but I believe that the majority of us, if we could be faced immediately with all the changes which will only be accomplished in several generations, would prefer Christianity.¹

Figgis would argue his estimate of the twentieth century on the ground that "positive paganisms" are sufficiently influential to defy the description of the present age as a negative culture.

It is unlikely that Figgis's approach to the problem of the relation between church and the community would have been appreciably different even if he had been less pessimistic in his estimate of his age. Figgis's basic political principles, as the study of his later political-historical works has indicated, were by definition opposed to the Church-State as representing the form of the "single society" which had historically given rise to so many injustices either to the State or the Church, depending on which held the balance of power.

Any attempt to impose the opposite (Church-State doctrine) doctrine seems to me partly to be a survival from the regime of the seventeenth century, and from the theocratic ideals which Puritans and Carolines alike inherited from the Middle Ages; and

1. Eliot, op. cit., p. 12.

partly due to the definite effort to establish an all-embracing humanitarian Church-State, which would ultimately mean the destruction of all freedom in religious bodies. For the unitary doctrine of the State leads only, in very rare instances, to the establishment of the claims of the Church (which from this standpoint are always illegitimate), and then they only take the form of supremacy. In nine cases out of ten it means the secularising of the Church, and the dominance of Erastianism.¹

Every attempt to raise the code of the nation to that of the Church leads, if unsuccessful, to an attempt to lower the code of the Church to that of the world, because it proceeds from a notion that at bottom the two are identical. Thus if the lax party gets the upper hand it will compel the Church to conform to its standards, an attempt which is being made on all hands just now. The two societies are distinct--distinct in origin, in aim, and (if you have toleration) in personnel. The smaller is never likely, as things are, to control the larger. If she attempt to do so she will be beaten, and in the process be like to lose her own freedom. The Puritans attempted to raise the nation to their own notions of a high morality. The consequence was seen after the Restoration. It is the essence of the Church to be different from the world, and her mission to proclaim that difference. Whenever men try to sanctify the world by raising it to the level of the Church, they commonly succeed only in lowering the life of the Church to accommodate it to the practice of the world. The two centuries which began with Pope Boniface VIII ended with Alexander VI.²

Figgis, as has been observed, makes much of the "two society" developments in political thinking whereby both church and state came to be recognized as units enjoying their particular prerogatives, each having an identity of its own which guards against loss of identity through the illegitimate encroachments of the other. One would expect that Figgis would proceed to apply to the full his principle of the real personality of groups to both parties suggested by the term, "two society." The fact is, however, that while insisting on the real personality of the church

1. Figgis, Churches in the Modern State, pp. 130-131.

2. Ibid., pp. 133-134.

which the state has no power to grant but only to recognize, there is no parallel development of the real personality of the state. He proceeds from his deep conviction of the real personality of the church to the real personality of the vast number of interrelated societies which go to make up the social structure, all the while avoiding any discussion of or concession to the real personality of the state. There seems to be a reluctance to recognize such a possibility similar to the reluctance of seventeenth century Jesuits to concede that the state, as well as the church, is a "perfect society."¹

Vidler writes:

Figgis was concerned to establish the group personality of societies in the State over against "the omniscient State", and not the personality of the State itself. He maintained that the true idea of the State is that of a "communitas communitatum," but his own emphasis was on the "communitatum" rather than on the "communitas."²

That Figgis's emphasis was on the "communitatum" rather than on the "communitas" is borne out by his own words:

As a matter of fact, in England at least, it is these smaller associations which have always counted for most in the life of the individual. His school, or college, his parish or county, his union or regiment, his wife or family is the most vitally formative part in the life of most men; and in so far as England has anything worthy in civic life to show to the world, it is the spectacle of individuals bred up or living within these small associations which mould the life of men more intimately than does the great collectivity we call the State.³

The extent to which Figgis considered groups within the state

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1. Cf. Gerson to Grotius, p. 160.
 2. Vidler, op. cit., p. 57, footnote 3.
 3. Figgis, Churches in the Modern State, pp. 48-49.

to be a more basic reality than the state itself is vividly conveyed by his attitude toward the education controversy.

Throughout the education controversy much has been heard against the iniquity of privately managed schools receiving public money, at least in the form of rates (for the income-tax is not concerned with conscience). Now surely (except in the case of the one-man manager) this is a total misconception. As opposed to State management, perhaps the word private may be admitted, but when it implies, as it ought, purely individual management, a false view is suggested. These social bodies other than the State are not only not private, but in their working they are more akin to the State than they are to the individual. ... The popular use of the word "Public School" to denote a school under collective management is a far more reasonable and realistic habit, though I suppose that it is not technically justified.¹

Rather than look upon the state as one great personality among, if not superior to, other group personalities, Figgis speaks of it as something of an impersonal referee among the vast number of group persons making up the community.

What do we find as a fact (as actual features of civil society)? Not, surely, a sand-heap of individuals, all equal and undifferentiated, unrelated except to the State, but an ascending hierarchy of groups, family, school, town, county, union, Church, etc., etc. All these groups (or many of them) live with a real life; they act towards one another with a unity of will and mind as though they were single persons; they all need to be allowed reasonable freedom, but must be restrained from acts of injustice towards one another or the individual; ... Between all these groups there will be relations, and not merely between the individuals composing them. To prevent injustice between them and to secure their rights, a strong power above them is needed. It is largely to regulate such groups and to ensure that they do not outstep the bounds of justice that the coercive force of the State exists.²

1. *Ibid.*, pp. 68-70.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 87-90. The extent to which Figgis emphasizes the necessity of state regulation and police action exonerates Figgis's thesis of the accusation that it leans in the direction of syndicalism, a tendency which Barker recognizes in the English development of Gierke's

By confining the state to a regulative function in the sphere of external action as he does, by refusing to consider the state as a person in the same sense in which other groups are, Figgis points up, by way of omission, the fact

that a nation's life is larger than what is comprised in its organised activities as a state.¹

Figgis would agree in large part with a distinction between society and the state made by Barker:

A Society is a community of human beings who seek to fulfil the general purposes of human life in all its aspects. A State is an association of the same beings, in legal form, for the specific purpose of regulating human life, in the sphere of external action, by rules designed to secure the minimum of friction between its members and the maximum of their development.²

It may well be questioned whether or not Figgis's failure to

doctrine: "...Gierke's doctrine---at any rate in our own country, and since Maitland first gave it vogue in 1902---has been drawn into that way. We must not be pragmatical, nor judge the truth of a doctrine by the uses to which it is subsequently put. But at any rate we may examine the company which it keeps, and if we are already inclined to question its truth on fundamental and essential grounds, we may perhaps find that the results of such examination serve to corroborate our doubts." Barker, op. cit., p. lxxxi.

On one occasion a French Syndalisticist, having read Churches in the Modern State, came to visit Figgis at Mirfield. Beyond the fact that he was a complete atheist, he, in lecturing at the college, gave such a bloody picture of social reform that Figgis was thrown in a rather unhappy light at the college.

Coker concludes somewhat critically of the Pluralists' (of which Figgis was one) deprecation of the monists' facing up to the fact of state sovereignty. "The significant fact appears to be that, however much we exalt individual or group freedom, we are faced at present with the prospect of a more varied and centralized political control, and that the net result of our practical efforts at devolution will not soon diminish greatly the scope or importance of state authority." Francis W. Coker, Recent Political Thought, (New York, D. Appleton-Century Company, (1934)), p. 517.

1. Vidler, op. cit., p. 62.

2. Barker, op. cit., lxx.

recognize the personality of the state was a convenient omission and one only questionably permissible even according to his own precepts. Even when the state is functioning in its regulatory capacity, it has the marks of a self-developing personality as much as, if not more than, the multitude of other group personalities in the community. Even a policeman is a moral person. But if there is no logical justification of his neglecting the state as a group-person, perhaps the omission can be explained, if not justified, on the consideration that "...if a boat is on the point of capsizing, it can only be trimmed by leaning far over to the other side." Figgis felt that political thought and action both historically and, what was more to the point, in modern times, was enslaved to a doctrine representing the state as a super-man, ruling individuals who are below men. In "leaning far over to the other side," he stressed almost exclusively the personality of the smaller groups within which individual personality comes to maturity.

By not having any developed theory of the personality of the state, Figgis was not forced to confront the fact that a church could not be true to its mission to the world of persons, including group persons, if she did not at least strive to induce those persons to become Christians. "Personality and religion," as Forsyth observed, "are inseparable."¹ For the church to abandon the state to its own religious devices would be something less than Christian.

Figgis does not face up to the inseparability of personality and

1. Forsyth, op. cit., p. 191.

religion (except, of course, in the church) even when dealing with those groups for the recognition of whose personality he so vigorously contends. Figgis was so insistent that the Christian does not have any right to make decisions on a Christian basis when identified with a predominantly non-Christian, heterogenous group, that it may be surmised with considerable certainty that he would not have gone along with Relton (indebted as Relton was to Figgis's thought),¹ who claims in essence that all forms of group life are legitimate areas of Christian expression.

Group-consciousness based on race, nationality, family, class, area of government, political party, and so on, is not, by Christians, to be ignored, abjured, and repudiated out of hand; any of these groupings may be hindrances to faith and the fellowship of the faithful, occasions of dragging down to the level of the world; so that what is here meant by giving precedence to a fellowship based on religion is that the claims of these forms of group consciousness should be scrutinized in the light of devotion to Christ himself.²

In speaking about any proposal for a complete separation of the church and state (he recognizes each as a group personality), P. T. Forsyth shows from his standpoint how detrimental it is to personality to demand a different level of conduct according to the allegiance one has in mind at the moment.

The people of this country at least are little likely to accept the absolute secularization of the State; which would be an admission that civilization, or society, cannot become Christian but can only have a Christian society, in the shape of a Church, beside it or within it. But we cannot so divide either a soul, or a people. The polar unity that connects both refuses to be cleft with a gulf across which nothing travels, or to suffer a paralysis which makes the right hand careless of what is done

1. Infra., p. 124-125.

2. Relton, op. cit., pp. 147-148.

by the left.¹

Figgis's constant reiteration that whatever influence the church is to have on civilization must be through the medium of the individual Christian acting as an individual seems to be at loggerheads with another of his often-repeated contentions that individual persons cannot exist apart from society and can fulfill their destiny only in society. The former thesis appears to permit the individual as a member of society to fulfill all but his Christian destiny as a member of society.

Barker is quite explicit in his assertion that Figgis's development of Gierke's theme, which he looked upon as leaning in the direction of syndalicism,² is alien to the logic of Gierke's general theory. According to Barker, the logic of his theory tends more towards the creation of a Leviathan.

The theory of the real personality of groups may not only trend towards syndicalism. It may also keep other company; and it may trend towards that very doctrine of the absolute State from which it is supposed to be our rescue. We can only make the theory a defence and buttress against the State if we suppose that it does not apply to the State, and if we say that there is no real person standing behind the State, as there is behind other groups.³

The thing which Barker fails to consider is the possibility in our time of a church which, even as historically, has a sense of divine mission, a supernaturally imposed resolve to stay alive, a church which would resist in the name of the Christ, whose body the church is and in whom her

1. Peter T. Forsyth, Theology in Church and State, (London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1915), p. 122.

2. Supra., p. 115.

3. Barker, op. cit., p. lxxxiv.

personality consists, any effort of the Leviathan to rid the state of this most significant of all group persons.

...he leaves out of account the belief that the church as a group-person and the greatest of group-persons stands over against the State to check its monistic pretensions.¹

But this reply to Barker's accusation based on the unique personality of the church is not here presented as though to suggest that Figgis would have made such a rebuttal. He does not plead for the recognition of the group-personality of the church as distinct from that enjoyed by the vast number of other groups which constitute the community. Writing in Theology of Church and State, which was published only a year after Churches in the Modern State, Forsyth, though not denying the personality of group-persons other than the church, the state, and the family, suggested against the background of his great conviction as to the uniqueness of the church's personality, that only by pleading its uniqueness could the church obtain the desired recognition of its personality and the attending right to interpret its own articles and to alter them without any consent other than its own.

There are two suggestions. The first is that every group, commercial, cultured, or other, that has shown itself by a long and effective history to possess a common life independent of the coming and going of individuals should rank as a corporate personality, with innate revisory rights. But this is hardly practical politics. The State would never consent to relinquish its control over the national universities for instance. And it has not yet done with the City Guilds. So that the other course awaits us--of recognizing in the Church (through its indwelling Lord) a life quite unique, a collective personality more distinctive and divine than that of any other society (even the State itself), and a sanctity of in-

1. Vidler, op. cit., p. 72, footnote 1.

born right more immune than theirs from the law's control, as owing nothing to the law's creation. Such a solution would be practical to the situation. And it would have the greater advantage of being a religious solution to a difficulty religious in its nature.¹

It is impossible that the Church, the one society in the world which has an absolutely universal power and destiny, should be treated by the State like a gas company, and that as a Church it should for the State simply not exist.²

Of the two suggestions considered by Forsyth, Figgis chooses to follow the first. Figgis offers a Christian solution to the problem of the relation of church and community when challenging those who identify themselves with the Holy Catholic Church; he offers a solution couched in political terminology when addressing the larger community or when recommending to the church an approach that might be acceptable to both Christian and non-Christian. He was concerned not with the most that the church could claim but with the "least that it can claim without committing corporate suicide."

Some, perhaps, will doubtless criticise what is here said, especially in the third lecture, and will complain that it is unduly conciliatory to the State. I cannot help that. That the Church might under certain conditions claim a great deal more may be true. But with so much frank denial of her right to claim anything at all, it seems to me at this juncture far more profitable to discuss what she must claim so long as she is a Church, than what she might claim if her right to an inherent life were once universally admitted by statesmen and lawyers.³

However much it may be agreed that Figgis was far too conciliatory and that he indeed could have claimed much more in the name of the

1. Forsyth, op. cit., pp. 174-175.

2. Ibid., p. 244.

3. Figgis, Churches in the Modern State, p. 4.

church, yet his whole position is geared to confront certain stark realities, which even advocates of the joining in holy matrimony¹ of church and state recognize as very real obstacles to this match-making.² The would-be groom (the state) finds it impossible to settle on any one bride (considering the religious heterogeneity of the modern community).³ If he were to settle according to his liking, his choice would offend the sensibilities of all the other hopefuls whom he had no desire to offend. If he were to settle on one that would, in a sense, be agreeable and representative of all, she would be of such weak character that the contemplated life together would be both boring and unproductive. The embracing of a watered-down religiosity, a vague undenominationalism,⁴ would be of no use to the church nor the state.

The danger, and one which Figgis does not appear to recognize as a necessary fact, is that the bride (the church), despairing of the

1. Vide, Forsyth, op. cit., pp. 241-242.

2. "Since the object of the church is the redemption of the world, it must at any moment consider the world as it is." Figgis, Our Place in Christendom, (London, Longmans and Green, 1916), p. 120. (Lectures delivered at St. Martin's in the Fields, Autumn 1915; subsequently published in book form to which Figgis contributed Chapter 4, "Councils and Unity," and Chapter 6, "National Churches.")

3. "In seeking to realize a Christian theory (sc. of the relations of Church and State) we have to face the fact that there is to-day no united church, and that in society the Christian faith is not, as in the mediaeval world, in possession, nor yet, as in the early Church, a new challenge." Vidler, op. cit., p. 98, quoting C.O.P.E.C. Commission Report on Politics and Citizenship.

"If my outline of Christian society has commanded the ascent of the reader, he will agree that such a society can only be realised when the great majority of the sheep belong to one fold." Eliot, op. cit., p. 46.

4. "By undenominationalism we mean the attempt to preserve Christianity in abstraction from a substantial church." Vidler, op. cit., p. 131.

day when the state will finally make up its mind and ask the question, will go into seclusion and strive to make the best of her spinsterhood, will leave the state to his bachelor fate (the church would thus resign itself by its lack of relation to the state, to the category of a sect).

Figgis's treatment of the problem of church and state, church and community, had a very real influence on the approach of many English churchmen to the problem during the years following his delivery of Churches in the Modern State in lecture form in 1911, and its appearance in book form in 1914.

The comments of Bishop Gore, the founder of the Community of the Resurrection, in testifying before the Archbishops' Committee on Church and State, 1916, are a fine index of the extent of the impact made by Figgis:

The present writer believes, with the author of Churches in the Modern State, that it's a matter of greatest importance that the modern legal and general theory of state unity and authority derived from Roman times should be so fundamentally remodeled as to recognise fully and frankly, not only with regard to the Established Church but with regard to all other churches and corporate bodies, that the great unity of the State and its authority can include and recognize a great variety of relatively free corporations, exercising in their own spheres authority over their members, while they yield all of the recognition to the State which composes and, in its own general sphere, rules them all.¹

Other testimonies in the same report, though not mentioning Figgis's name, bear witness directly or indirectly to his particular emphasis.

It would be mistaken to regard the Middle Ages as a continual fight between spiritual and temporal. These are rather two as-

1. Report of the Archbishops' Committee on Church and State, 1916, pp. 247-248.

pects of one united community.¹

There can be no question that the solution of the difficulties that we have described must be found by securing to the Church liberty to perform the functions which it alone is confident to undertake, and transferring to it work which the Parliament can no longer adequately perform. This is just not merely as a practical way out of the difficulty but also by the fundamental conception of the church as a self-governing society, ready, and able to cooperate with the civil power but maintaining its independent existence, and rejecting the notion that it is in any sense a mere organ of the state.²

Giving evidence of Figgis's continuing influence, Barker said before the Archbishops' Commission on the Relations Between Church and State, 1935:

Speaking in terms of my own subject, as a teacher of Political Science, I could say that I have noticed in the last thirty years (particularly under the influence of Dr. Figgis) a vogue of certain theories of Gierke (or rather Maitland in his introduction to his translation of a chapter of Gierke), and a consequent disposition to advocate what are called the "inherent rights" of the real "group-person," whether civil or ecclesiastic.³

Among the people whose writings contain an acknowledgment of debt to Dr. Figgis and give strong evidence of his influence, let three of them be singled out: H. M. Relton, H. J. Laski, and P. T. Forsyth.

Relton, the most recent of the ^{three} ~~four~~ to express his indebtedness writes:

In particular I would express my indebtedness to F. W. Maitland's translation of Otto Gierke's work, and the writings of the late Dr. Figgis.⁴

Later on in the same work, after quoting from a portion of Churches in

1. Ibid., p. 15.

2. Ibid., p. 31.

3. Report of Archbishops' Commission, 1935, pp. 68-69.

4. Relton, op. cit., p. 11.

the Modern State, which contains a summary statement of Figgis's main position, he writes ~~these words~~; ¹

These words were penned in 1911, and all that has happened at home and abroad since is surely an illuminating comment upon them and a striking tribute to their prophetic note.²

Although H. J. Laski has since moved away from the doctrine of the personality of the group, in 1914 he wrote:

How much it (his book, Problem of Sovereignty) owes to Maitland and Saleilles and Dr. Figgis, I dare not estimate.³

Lawyers, for the most part, have tended to believe that the status of a person is something it is in the power of the State alone to confer, and in this view Austin, doubtless, would have most fully concurred. But surely it is abundantly clear that the personality of associations is primary, that it springs from the fact of their existence, and is not conceded to them by the State.⁴

P. T. Forsyth in Theology in Church and State, as has been seen, moves considerably beyond the claims made by Figgis, both for the church and the state,⁵ but he too acknowledges a very real indebtedness to him:

Some years ago I came across Maitland's edition of Gierke's Political Theories of the Middle Age, to find that here was a point of view so new and thorough as to suggest a reconstruction of many aspects of our usual attitude on Church questions, as well as on the certain others. Then, in 1913, I read Dr.

1. Some of the words to which Relton was referring: "...More and more it is clear that the mere individual's freedom against an omnipotent State may be no better than slavery; more and more is it evident that the real question of freedom in our day is the freedom of smaller unions to live within the whole." Figgis, Churches in the Modern State, p. 52.

2. Relton, op. cit., p. 28.

3. Harold J. Laski, Studies in the Problem of Sovereignty, (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1914), Preface.

4. Ibid., p. 272.

5. Supra., pp. 120-121.

Figgis' book, so largely based on Gierke, Churches in the Modern State, This work of a historian highly erudite and spiritual acted so strongly on me that, falling on the soil prepared by Gierke, it sprang up in the second portion of this book. The principles there treated are of the first value for a theory of the Church which is to be just both to its distinctive life and dogma, its long history, and its relation to the society round it.¹

If there is a sense in which Relton and Forsyth (especially Forsyth), in elaborating on Figgis's theme arrive at a more acceptable interpretation of the church and state, church and community problem, it is no discredit to the master that he was excelled by his students.

Earlier in this chapter considerable attention was given to Figgis's general enthusiasm for the political principles enshrined in the Conciliar Movement, the movement which he recognized as the culmination of medieval constitutionalism.

The preceding pages have shown the principles of Constance and Basel to be an important part of the working basis of Figgis's suggestion as to how the state ought to conduct itself. Now, in the original context of the Councils' preoccupation with matters pertaining to the problem of authority within the church, Figgis is seen to single out the principles enshrined in the movement as the safeguard against the all-devouring autocracy of Rome, as the preservative against mere individualism and the disorganized anarchy of Christendom divided into warring sects, and as the example of, if not the authentication of, the English Church.

One of the most important claims made by the fathers of Constance and the other councils was that "the church is nothing less than the whole

1. Forsyth, op. cit., pp. vii-viii.

of it."

With an iteration almost wearisome the Conciliar party assert that the commission to St. Peter was a commission to the whole Church; that the Papal power is only representative; that he is not "dominus" but minister; that he may be restrained, and even deposed, as he was. I think some went so far as to say that the Papacy might be abolished, if the Church saw fit, for "orbis major urbe." None of the Conciliar writers could dispute that the actual administrative power rested in the Pope, although many wished to curtail it and to devise a definite system of constitutional government. Still, the Pope's authority is merely that of the mouthpiece; the real authority is that which exists diffusively in the whole "communitas fidelium."¹

Drawing the lesson from this Conciliar emphasis that real authority "exists diffusively in the whole 'communitas fidelium'," Figgis concludes:

What we need most is to realise that authority in the Church of God is the expression of the life of the whole Christian community, and no single member but bears his part.²

The truth...sees the spirit of Christ, the authority, in the Christian body as a whole, and does not concentrate it in a centre, not even in a general council.³

These truths are presented by Figgis as opposed to the political principles enshrined in ultramontanist⁴ which, he insists, are inextricably bound up with the false theory of the omnipotent sovereign. Ultramontanism represents the development within the church of a theory analogous to that which Figgis tirelessly combated as it evidenced itself in the state.

1. Figgis, Churches in the Modern State, pp. 157.

2. Figgis, The Fellowship of the Mystery, p. 193.

3. Ibid., p. 202.

4. Figgis enjoyed the optimism of "...attributing to the ultramontane Papacy the character of a transient historical phenomenon." Churches in the Modern State, p. 155.

...the development of the Corpus Juris Canonici, with the principles that underlie it, has merely meant the taking over from the Corpus Juris Civilis of the conception of the sovereign power of the Emperor, and its transference to the Pope. The doctrine of the "plenitudo potestatis," of which we hear in all their writing, is purely the Roman theory of sovereignty vested in the Pope. The differences are all in favour of the Papal autocracy. ... The Church is thus conceived merely as a State on the antique model, with all power centred in the Pope or derived from him, and no jurisdiction nor any rights existing except expressly or tacitly by his delegation.¹

Figgis then proceeds to inform his readers wherein the practice of single sovereign, unitary political principles in the church is even more serious than their practice in the state.

...all this is only what we have been already discussing. What is worth adding is this. A doctrine which denies reality and all-self-developing life to the parts of the body politic is in religion yet more disastrous than in civil society, because in the long run it must destroy the springs of spiritual life in the individual conscience.²

Furthermore:

The apotheosis of the Pope has destroyed Episcopacy as a serious force..... in ultramontane theory the Pope is omnipresent and every bishop, every priest even, is only the Pope's delegate, just as every police-court magistrate represents "His Majesty the King, his crown and dignity." From the ultramontane standpoint, to suggest that a parish or province or even a national Church could exist as such apart from the fountain of all its life, would be like saying that you would have a legal jurisdiction in any royal country apart from the king of it.³

But not only does Figgis champion the Conciliar movement as representing a saner view of church polity than that of Ultramontanism. The Conciliar emphasis on authority as existing diffusely in the whole

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1. Figgis, Churches in the Modern State, pp. 135-136.
 2. Ibid., pp. 153-154.
 3. Ibid., pp. 149, 151.

"*communitas fidelium*" also argues against the kind of individualism entertained by some Christians which rebels against any suggestion that the church has any authority over them and which considers church membership to be not of the essence of the Christian life.

Elaborating on such thinking, Figgis writes:

No individual need join because he is a Christian; while he remains he must, it is true, obey its rules, but he can leave it whenever he likes, on any pretext, without impairing his Christianity, just as a man can leave a club without affecting his claim to be an Englishman.¹

In contrast to such individualism, individualism of the kind that Figgis saw to be the root of so much error alike in politics and religion, he writes:

The Catholic notion of authority asserts that the Christian becomes such only by membership of the Christian society, of which the seal is baptism; just as an Englishman is an Englishman because he is a member of the English nation and a subject of King George. Moreover, it goes on to assert that he cannot, if he would, repudiate its claims upon him. True, he is free to leave it, and no one can compel him to remain; but if he does leave it, he does so at the peril of his Christianity, for schism is a sin. This is the conception which is largely denied today, for it involves the detested notion of authority as inherent in the life of the Christian. Many men, deeply devoted to our Lord, regard all such claims as an infringement of natural liberty, the invention of aspiring priests; others, glorying in the name of Churchmen, would yet repudiate with scorn all attempt at discipline.²

In keeping with Figgis's not uncommon practice of turning to man's general social experience for excellent examples of the principles which have meaning for church polity as well as state government, Figgis focuses the reader's attention on school life as illustrating both the

1. Figgis, The Fellowship of the Mystery, pp. 182-183.

2. Ibid., p. 183-184.

necessity of authority in group life and also of the individual's contribution to that authority to which he also submits himself:

Let us take an instance from a society we have all been through--school life. What is the nature of authority in the form of communal existence which we enjoy in a highly organised school, concerned with the whole life, not the mere instruction, of its members? Does it consist in the commands of the head-master? I trow not. Is it in his power, even including that of all his delegates--under-masters and prefects--to issue commands? Hardly. Something it is, deeper and more subtle than any powers of command. Surely the authority of a school, while it includes all the elements I mentioned above, is rather to be found in the togetherness of the social life of its members, including those gone from it. The total pressure of this or any new boy would come to him as its authority. Some of this (a very little) is written in rules; more of it is crystallised into public opinion. More still is indefinable--a general spirit, what one calls "tone," constantly changing yet always continuous, All alike share it (this authority); all in some way submit to it; and all contribute to it. Not the newest or the least effective member but makes some difference, either by his character or by the lack of it; nor, on the other hand, can the strongest or most influential person ever act alone.¹

Addressing himself to the problem in the England of his day of men who claimed membership in not places of authority in the church while at the same time refusing to submit themselves to the authority of the church even in the most fundamental matters of faith and morals, Figgis writes:

In England, too, the fact of establishment lends colour to the claim that every Englishman has a right to use all the offices of the Church, without fulfilling any moral or spiritual obligations whatever. Even more ludicrous is that form of this dislike to definition which is shown in the claim that an official of the Church should be allowed entire freedom of criticism, while still continuing to exercise his office. It should be no less clear that if criticism of any society, whether political or religious, carries any member of it to the point at which he repudiates its foundations, his only course is to leave it. Yet entire freedom for any and every kind of

1. Ibid., pp. 188-189.

historical criticism is now claimed for a priest, not merely as a man, but as a priest continuing to exercise his ministry. If this claim were admitted, a priest would be right in celebrating the Eucharist even after he had become convinced, with Professor Drews or Mr. W. B. Smith, that our Lord never existed at all.¹

Figgis further singles out the Conciliar movement for its use of the legal principle "Quod omnes tangit, ab omnibus approbetur" not only as sanctioning church councils but also as a ground for giving the laity a voice in the councils, especially in matters of faith which concern them. This is in contrast to the ultramontanism against which the Conciliar Movement was fighting, which allows to the laity no more than a passive role in the life of the church. "The mass of the people have nothing to do with the law except to obey it." Figgis singles out Dietrich of Niem as one who realized in special measure how the authority of the church resides in the whole church with each individual having a share in that authority.

It was the cry of Dietrich of Niem that if neither the Pope nor the cardinals could call a council, recourse must be had first to the local hierarchy, but ultimately to the citizens themselves, and even the poorest old woman.²

Figgis felt very strongly about the place of the laity in the church.

In regard, moreover, to the Church, we cannot often enough repeat that the Church of the future must be a laymen's Church, (although it still must have its priesthood), that is, the great democracy of God's servants and Christ's brethren, and no exclusive or illimitable power into which they may not look.³

As has been seen,⁴ Figgis's initial concern was with the Con-

1. Ibid., pp. 178-179.

2. Figgis, Our Place in Christendom, p. 9.

3. Figgis, Churches in the Modern State, pp. 154-155.

4. Supra., p. 62.

ciliar Movement as it insisted that authority rests in the entire community, not just in its titular head. His later concern was with the federalistic aspect of the movement wherein the rights of groups within the larger group are recognized and protected. Attention is now turned to his preoccupation with this later aspect of the movement.

In the first chapter which Figgis contributed to Our Place in Christendom, he refers to those Conciliar writers who emphasized the federalistic side of the movement:

...in some writers there is the sense also that every individual community, every diocese, shares in this (the sense of communal authority), to some degree, and more especially the nations.¹

As Figgis speaks in behalf of the authenticity of the Catholicity of the English Church, his appeal is "more especially to the nations" as having very real authority within the whole, and very considerable right of self-determination.

In order to justify the English Church now and since the Reformation, you have to establish two things: (1) that the parts, in this case a nation, or if you will the two provinces, have such inherent powers of life and self-development, that the breach with the Papacy did not affect them vitally; (2) that what they did or suffered was not of such a nature as to cut these parts off from that stream of universal communal life we call the Catholic Church. For that purpose it is needful to reassert the principles set out in the fifteenth century at Constance and at Basel.²

Particular churches, as Laud said, must have real inherent powers--i.e., that relatively compact group of the Catholic body we call a national church must have within it a life not merely derived from the center; and it must be capable, if necessary, of acting on its own.³

1. Figgis, Our Place in Christendom, p. 87.

2. Figgis, Churches in the Modern State, p. 156.

3. Figgis, Our Place in Christendom, p. 131.

Speaking in behalf of the wisdom of considering the Catholic Church in terms of its national units, Figgis writes:

The question is whether, so long as nations exist, that sense of communal authority on the one hand, and on the other of inherent life in the parts not merely derived power from the centre, is not best expressed and most effectively preserved by an organization of the church with natural units like those of England, Russia, Greece, etc. Nor can I see any ground to doubt that God may have a word for a nation not as mere individual units but as gathered into a religious society. Some people seem to think that it is un-Christian to talk of national churches, because a nation is a national unit. If that is so, the arrangement of many a diocese, the seat of the bishop, the patriarchate, the province, must be equally un-Christian. They all followed civil lines. Any unified group of men that is real may be the centre of a church. This truth is not altered by the fact that many members of the nation feel no such allegiance. With religious liberty that is inevitable, for many will not be Christians or even theists at all. Nor must we forget that all the baptised are members of God's church, and that the members of those unauthorized guilds we call the sects are not outside the church altogether, except on a theory which not even the Romans accept. Further, such a national group within the vast church universal will be expected to make its own contribution, and must enjoy a relative independence. The real question is whether such a national group has any true unity--and what is the true nature of religious authority. On neither the Papal nor the Protestant doctrine can this organization be accepted.

The contribution of nationality to the church is a real one; that contribution of liberty with order which is the distinct quality of the English looks like anarchy to the autocrat, and like tyranny to the anarchist.¹

What is interesting as one reads the above is that in considering the

1. Figgis, Our Place in Christendom, pp. 138-140. A reviewer of Our Place in Christendom wrote, "Two lectures are also contributed by Dr. Figgis, and while that on 'Council and Unity' is important, we regard this contribution on 'National Churches' in some respects the most useful chapter in the book. It is a bold, and we think convincing, justification of National churches, and will help many Anglicans who find the arguments of the 17th century divines in defence of the 'Ecclesia Anglicana' unsatisfying. "Times Literary Supplement," May 15, 1916, p. 30.

National Church, Figgis is not thinking only of the Church of England as such but of the English nation on its religious side, engulfing the non-religious and including, apparently, members of other churches within that large natural community. This is especially interesting in that it seems to contradict a reluctance previously observed¹ to think of the nation as, in any sense, a positive religious grouping. This may be explained on the basis that he changed his mind between 1911 when Churches in the Modern State was written and 1915 when he delivered his paper, "National Churches," which appeared under that heading as a chapter in Our Place in Christendom. The more likely explanation may be found in a word of caution which Figgis sounds to the student of St. Augustine, and to which the student of Figgis should attend:

One constant temptation besets the historian of thought in every sphere. He is apt to suppose that his subjects are more consistent than they are; to make logical wholes of scattered and often contradictory hints; and sometimes even to rule out, as unauthentic, writings which have no other evidence against them than that of being hard to reconcile with others of the same author. In no case could this be a worse error than in that of S. Augustine.²

In Our Place in Christendom, Figgis points up yet another important aspect of the Conciliar Movement:

Above all, perhaps, for the influence of the universities was paramount, it stands for the recognition of sound learning in the councils of the church—that principle which Creighton used to say was the distinctive quality of the English communion.³

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1. Supra., pp. 110-111.
 2. Figgis, The Political Aspects of Saint Augustine's 'City of God', pp. 7-8.
 3. Figgis, Our Place in Christendom, p. 94.

The works of John Neville Figgis, a one-time pupil at Cambridge of the man who singled out this "distinctive quality of the English communion," represent much of the sound learning to which the councils of his church referred for guidance in sound political thinking. All did not agree with "Figgis as a Political Thinker," but they all were aware of him, all had to contend with him, and many then, and not a few now, found much that recommended itself as the basis of sound political-historical judgment, sound decisions in church and state, church and community relations, and in sound thinking about the nature of authority within the church itself.

CHAPTER IV

FIGGIS AS A THEOLOGIAN

"A Plea For Otherworldliness"

L. S. Thornton relates that just previous to the First World War William Temple said that a war was an economic impossibility. Figgis, Thornton observed, saw differently. Figgis saw "death in the pot of modern civilization," and war came as no surprise to him. In 1913, Figgis wrote:

The forces of civilisation are imposing; but apart from Christ they are visibly dissolving. Its tall towers are shaking, and the splendid spires of the edifice of the western world are crumbling. Catastrophe is threatening. We can almost hear the thunders of the avalanche of war--war on a scale unknown. Hardly does the world even look stable any longer. It is not like the forties of Victorian complacency, but looks all tottering--tottering.¹

Figgis' sense of a world headed towards destruction obviously was not born of the final months of Germany's preparation for the war that was to terrorize the world for the next four years. Keble Talbot, a fellow member of the Community of the Resurrection and an intimate friend of Neville Figgis, writes that Figgis's estimate of civilization's tragic trend had not a little to do with the rector from Marnhull becoming the monk from Mirfield in 1907.

...and what powerfully contributed to the direction his life took and to his embrace of the vocation to which in the last

1. J. N. Figgis, Antichrist and Other Sermons, (London, Longmans, Green and Co., 1913), pp. 30-31.

thirteen years of his life he devoted himself was his haunting sense of a world rushing on catastrophe. ... It was evident to him that civilization had come to the crossroads. Its intellectual and moral chaos, its loss of inner faith, even of faith itself, its casual creeds, its increasing ruthlessness and radical injustice, its ugliness and banality, its fevered acquisitiveness--upon all this he embodied judgment and disaster.¹

Talbot continues by citing that incident in Figgis's life which raised the disharmony of modern standards with anything that even resembled a Christian standard to such an unbearable clamour in his own mind that he felt compelled to show his revulsion by withdrawing himself the more from the civilization whose Christian supports had been removed and to identify himself the more completely with the Christian faith, the only force that had the power, as he envisioned the plight of modern civilization, to redeem the world.

It was as he sat in the stalls watching one of Mr. Bernard Shaw's plays that he made up his mind to seek entry into a Religious Community. Either something like the ideas of that drastic critic of society were true, and there was no hope; or else the Christian Gospel of a supernatural Revelation and Redemption, the faith of the Saints of all the ages was the truth, and in that case he must stake all that he was and had upon it.²

His somewhat drastic step into the "religious life" was accompanied then and in the years that followed with equally drastic words:

The state of our cities, the lives of the vast masses are a dis-

1. Talbot, Keble, The Quarterly Chronicle of the Community of the Resurrection, (Christmas, 1940), 18. Figgis is sometimes said to have been very like Chesterton and that, for more reasons than a shared obesity. K. Talbot draws this comparison in conversation, pointing up Figgis' sense of the tragedy of the times, "In their different idioms, Figgis struck the same note as Chesterton. Yet Figgis shouts one note with a particular resonance: his declaring the end of an age."

2. Ibid.

grace to any civilisation, and insofar as that civilisation calls itself Christian, it is a lie.¹

...there are no longer grounds for believing that the Western world is Christian now in a sense in which it was not in the period immediately preceding the peace of the Church under Constantine the Great.²

Figgis had a tragic sense of the times in which he lived when most people were still enjoying the overflow into the twentieth century of the optimism of the Victorian era; furthermore, the century to which Figgis addressed himself, after completing two wars and entering into an era of the third, continues in need of the kind of scrutiny that he was able to give it. These things being true, one is drawn to this man, who was as unique and striking in thought and expression as he was ungainly in appearance. His preoccupation with an estimate of his time makes a fitting introduction to any consideration of "Figgis as a Theologian."

Anarchy best describes the twentieth century, according to Figgis's estimate of it: an anarchy intellectual, religious, and moral.

We live in a time of unparalleled intellectual anarchy when 'every man does that which is right in his own eyes' and no generally accepted canons can be admitted.³

Speaking of the intellectual anarchy against the background of his having taken note of the disappearance in his time of the previous century's general acceptance of some form of German idealism among students of philosophy and having noted by way of example the writings of such men as

1. Figgis, *Antichrist*, p. 191.

2. J. N. Figgis, *Civilisation at the Cross Roads*, (New York, Longmans, Green and Co., 1913), pp. 29-30.

For more about Figgis's estimate of twentieth century civilization as non-Christian, *supra.*, III.

3. Figgis, *Religion and English Society*, p. 43.

William James, ^{Henri} M. Bergson, Bertrand Russell, and G. E. Moore, he writes:

I note all these movements not in order to discuss them, but rather to point out that there is no such thing as philosophic authority at present, nor any likelihood of our reaching it;¹

Speaking of the religious anarchy, Figgis writes:

And not only is the Church no longer the religion of civilisation, but she is met by many competing systems, and that even on her own hypothesis that mankind needs redemption. That is the point. There are so many.²

So strange is the welter of creeds and sects, of religions and irreligions, moralists and immoralists, mystics, rationalists, and realists, and even Christians, that it is hard to guess what nostrum may be dominant with your next-door neighbour.³

Figgis gives the background for this religious anarchy by explaining that:

...the problem is not whether or no we shall have a spirit of faith, but of what kind it shall be. For the seventies and eighties the question was, Can we save religion? It might be legitimate to assume that if this were answered in the affirmative the battle was won, and a ground secured in some way for Christianity, even though it should be necessary to clip its wings.

Now, however, we have begun to realise that we are living in a new age, and that it will be an age of religion, or at least of religions. Men may oppose the Christian faith for many reasons: but less and less will they condemn her simply and solely on the ground that she is a religion. It is religion they are crying for, struggling for, determined in some way or other to get; although I grant that they do not for the most part expect to find what they are seeking in the Christian Church.⁴

...at this moment the question most of us have to decide is not whether or no religion is proper to human life, but what kind of religion it is to be.⁵

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1. Figgis, Civilisation at the Cross Roads, p. 41.
 2. Ibid., p. 34.
 3. Figgis, The Will to Freedom, p. 1.
 4. Figgis, The Fellowship of the Mystery, pp. 12-13.
 5. Ibid., p. 15.

Concomitant with Figgis's envisioning his as an "age of religion" was his view of it as an age of sharp struggle and strongly conflicting loyalties. Suggestive of the high feelings involved in the shift of the age from "one religion if any" to "which religion of many," he deals with the subject in lecture form under the heading of "Armageddon" and in sermon form under the heading of "Antichrist." In Antichrist he writes:

The world at large does not love Christ and it is at last able to say so. It is to betray the grossest ignorance of the world in which we live to talk of our present controversies as though they were all being conducted in a rectory garden, with every one friendly and the most unbelieving ready, and indeed anxious, to walk across the garden to the evening service if you could only make the path a little clearer. It is not a garden, it is a gulf which divides these people from the Church.

Do not let us deceive ourselves. This assault which is now being delivered from all sides is no child's game. It is not the melancholy unfaith of those who lament that they can but honour where we adore. It is not the languid refusal of some dilettante agnostic too much bored to decide. It is the passionate and deliberate hatred of all that we hold dear, by the fanatics of an alien faith--the faith that this world is all, that the Christian Church is a thing loathsome and contemptible; and also the belief that she is a decaying force, and the desire to be the power triumphant upon her ruins.¹

In brief:

In the last generation men were unable to take "Jesus as Lord," and they were sad. Now they are choosing other masters, and are glad. There is a world of difference.²

But if the anarchy among belligerent systems competing for men's allegiances was rampant, even more severe was the anarchy that ruled in the moral realm.

Apart from the Christian hope, we are in a state of chaos, only the more appalling that it seems to be hardly realised. The chaos

1. Figgis, Antichrist, pp. 12-13.

2. Figgis, The Gospel and Human Needs, p. 8.

is all the greater that it applies not only to fundamental doctrines, but to practical ideals. For the anarchy of speculative thought is almost a harmony compared with the chaos of the moral ideals. ...

Here and there you find a belated Positivist or an austere agnostic holding to an ideal indistinguishable from the Christian, but for the most part the non-Christian no longer even affects to take Jesus as Master, but opposes, with more or less of contempt for the founder, the whole system of Christian morals.¹

Figgis singles out a number of men in the literary and educational fields, such as Lowes Dickinson, H. G. Wells, Henry Sturt, and George Bernard Shaw, who evidenced the logical moral bankruptcy (although to them it was an ideal) of their frank disavowal of any Christian sympathies. Typical as such men were of the sharp divergence from Christian norms, and that without apology, none was quite so powerful a factor in the "transvaluation of all values" as the man with whom this principle is especially associated, i. e., Frederick Nietzsche.

The irruption of Nietzsche, that strange comet in the serene heaven of philosophy, has meant a revolution. The newethics discards the notion of love, ridicules sacrifice and pity, and pours a virulence of scornful hatred upon Christ Himself. Christian purity, Christian sympathy and humility, Christian gentleness and even courtesy are set at naught by the new apostles of the will to power, and a saturnalia of selfish pride is set up as our ideal.²

And not only did Nietzsche minister to the moral chaos; he also contributed significantly to the religious chaos by ridiculing the ideals of Christian character.

So long as men go on admiring Jesus and making Him their ideal, no good will come from disproving the Gospel history. Somehow

1. Figgis, Civilisation at the Cross Roads, pp. 52-53.

2. Figgis, The Gospel and Human Needs, p. 11.

or other men will hold to a system fundamentally Christian and will adopt practically, if not theoretically, an attitude of worship. They will act in a way which logically implies the system which in theory they have rejected. If they are finally to be cut loose from the Christian Church, they must be taught to trample on the Christian ideal. And so Nietzsche set himself to develop the taunt of the rejecting Jews at Our Lord, "He hath a devil."¹

The figure of Nietzsche, who epitomized for Figgis the religious and moral chaos of the age, held a strange fascination for him, so much so that Nietzsche was the subject of his Boss Lectures delivered in 1915 at Lake Forest College, Illinois, under the heading of The Will to Freedom or The Gospel of Nietzsche and The Gospel of Christ,² Disavowing that his interest in Nietzsche was stimulated only by the war with Germany, Figgis writes:

It is nearly twenty years (which would date his interest back to 1895) since his (Nietzsche's) danger and his charm became clear to me.³

Not a little of Nietzsche's charm for Figgis lay in the fact that Nietzsche derided many of the same idols of his time, the idols of sentimentalism, determinism, unwarranted optimism, rationalism, and the glori-

1. Figgis, Civilisation at the Cross Roads, p. 59.

2. This book was widely read and reviewed and well received without exception. "It is the outcome of a long companionship, it is appreciative, critical, affectionate, severe; and it is solid as well as brilliant." Journal of Theological Studies, XIX, (July, 1918), 377.

"He (Figgis) has produced the best exposition and criticism of the philosophy of the 'Will to Power' with which we are acquainted..... The truth is that Dr. Figgis is peculiarly fitted by temperament, as well as learning, to deal sympathetically with his subject. He shares Nietzsche's hostility to compromise and half views and can understand the essentially religious nature of the author he is criticising. ... We have found nothing to criticise but much to admire in Dr. Figgis' statement of Nietzsche's views." The Church Quarterly Review, LXXXV, (October 1917-January 1918), 363.

3. Figgis, The Will to Freedom, p. 5.

fication of comfort, riches, and immediate satisfaction, which idols were also the objects of Figgis's vituperation. Nietzsche also championed much in his own system which Figgis saw to be germane to "unmuffled," "distinctive" Christianity, the very elements which the modern advocates of a certain "reduced Christianity" were inclined to leave out in deference to the claims of the modern mind as enslaved to a mechanistic and outdated science operating out of bonds.

Nietzsche knew the tragedy of things. He never thought that evil was only an appearance, nor was suffering to him merely the creases in the eternal smile of the Absolute. No facile optimism, whether of Hegel or of Rousseau, no blind faith in the idol of automatic progress, no romantic idealisation of nineteenth-century enlightenment marred the clearness of his vision. He knew that life is tragic, and that man needs redemption. He knew, too, that the cost of any redemption that is worth having must be terrific. The price for the world's ransom must be paid in blood. The world would not be worth redeeming could it be paid in any lower coinage. In this sense Nietzsche is at one with all that is best in Christianity although he was opposed to much that masqueraded under that august title. Modern civilisation is the apotheosis of vulgarity--or was. In its gaudy and clamorous prosperity, with every shop-window shouting, men have mistaken all their values and mixed the colours of the world. In religion an idol has been made of easy amiability, and for the enthralling spectacle of God as Father men have substituted a pretty picture of the eternal grandmother. The "splendour of God" had become a tawdry oleograph, and a milk-and-water sentimentalism had usurped the once austere name of Christian piety. The reaction against Puritanism had led to a religion of weak good nature and the refusal of all austerity. It was against this that Nietzsche tilted when he attacked Strauss and denounced the shallowness of free-thinking optimists.¹

It is also true that Nietzsche's ideas have very much more affinity with the truly Christian conception of life than had the moral ideas of Strauss or of any other of the Pantheistic philosophers whom he superseded. It is true, also, that his attitude to life is at bottom mystical. He sees that man as he is is not a beautiful sight. He sees the wickedness of pessimism. Pessimism, the nay-

1. Figgis, *Ibid.*, pp. 312-314.

saying to life, is ten thousand times more wicked than all the variegated blasphemies of Nietzsche. Man can be saved only by becoming changed in his nature. That is the Christian doctrine of grace. Nietzsche is nearer to this than are those who preach a dogma of inevitable progress or those who deny sin. ... Also, when Nietzsche talks of the rarity of the higher man, he is more like Christianity than those who teach the contrary. Christians are, and are likely to be, a minority. It is a will consecrated to God that marks the Christian, not emotion or knowledge. In his insistence on the will and its training Nietzsche is in harmony with Christianity and with the characteristic English conception of education. Even the ideal of the superman enshrines the truth that individuality or group distinction has its own quality, and that man is of worth, through something inherent and inalienable in himself. All forms of Christianity admit this, except the heresies which are toppling into Pantheism. Nietzsche's hatred of equality in the sense in which he gives it is not belied by Christian sentiment. His idealisation of heroism--his use of suffering, the religion of valour--is only the ancient doctrine of the Cross taught by Jesus Christ, palpitating in St. Paul and the whole New Testament. Even what he says of the barbaric virtues, his new commandment, "Be hard," might perhaps be interpreted as little more than a warning against that pity which is born of cowardice, or that sympathy which is a form of luxury.¹

Sick of the stuffy atmosphere of academic lecture-halls, Nietzsche cries for the free and open air. Wearied with domestic virtues and morality in petto, he hails barbaric grandeur. From the mean streets of modern civilisation he calls men to Alpine heights of danger and triumph, despising above all things utilitarian democracy and the optimism of inevitable progress, with its gospel of the sofa-millennium.²

It is as the tight-rope dancer living dangerously on a line strung between precipices amid eternal snows that Nietzsche is so much of a "wonder, a beauty, and a terror." In a new age, very childlike, he calls to all with the spirit of youth, to try all experiments, to shrink back neither for fear nor for love, neither for God nor for man, neither for good nor for evil. This call, together with

1. Ibid., pp. 143-146. Figgis repeated his lectures on The Will to Freedom to an English audience at All Saints, Margaret Street, London, in the spring of 1916. The sister of King George V attended one of the lectures, following which she was heard to comment, "It seems to me that Father Figgis makes Nietzsche out to be quite a Christian."

2. Ibid., pp. 91-92.

his strange, mystical sense of the eternal in the transient and, therefore, the value of the moment; this paradox of the ungodly who yet worships, of the immoralist who preaches self-control, of the Antichrist who could mount the Cross, the iconoclast who could yet set up a religion, this it is which gives to Friedrich Nietzsche a charm that will outlast all the febrile puerilities of his attack on Christianity and all the superficial snobbery of his contempt for the common man.¹

So much for Nietzsche's charm; what of Nietzsche's danger?

Figgis suffered no delusions regarding the antagonism towards Christianity of the man who looked upon Jesus as a decadent, a madman, and who wrote:

One does well to put on gloves when reading the New Testament. The proximity of so much uncleanness almost compels one to do so.²

The Christian Church is to me the greatest of all imaginable corruptions; it has had the will to the ultimate corruption that is possible. The Christian Church has left nothing untouched with its depravity, it has made a worthlessness out of every value, a lie out of every truth, a baseness of soul out of every straightforwardness.³

One of the chief dangers of Nietzsche was seen by Figgis to be the application of his unbridled individualism, egoism, and racism to the realm of politics.

Is it not, then, obvious what is likely to happen if any state or nation adopts his views? It can assert that the State is Power, nothing else but Power. It can believe with Nietzsche that power is the one end of life. It may go on to proclaim itself free from all restraints in dealing with enemies and from every kind of limitation in dealing with its subjects or with religious and economic groups.⁴

Nothing can relieve Nietzsche from the stain of having stimulated the tendencies, already sufficiently strong, towards that essen-

1. Ibid., pp. 263-264.

2. Ibid., p. 156, quoting Antichrist (Nietzsche), pp. 314.

3. Ibid., p. 6, quoting Antichrist, ¶ 62.

4. Ibid., pp. 283-284.

tial evil of Paganism which we see at its worst in Nero and at its best in Diocletian. The Italian tyrants of the Renaissance, refined and cruel, are the true comment on this doctrine.¹

No small part of Figgis' sense of "a world heading towards destruction" and the imminence of war was due to his long acquaintance with, fascination for, and fear of Nietzsche.

War, also, it has been thought, would be shown to be a chimera, because it is so expensive. A rationalist world would settle down to eternal mutton-chops. Nietzsche saw through this falsity. So far from all grounds of quarrel coming to an end with the growth of great aggregations, they have increased. Now there has dawned upon men's minds the prospect of world-dominion. Here Nietzsche was prophet.²

"The time for petty politics is past; the next century will bring the struggle for the dominion of the world--the compulsion to great politics."³

It is due in part to Figgis's estimate of Nietzsche as a prophet that Figgis, himself, deserves a similar ascription.

Thus Figgis presented Nietzsche as the chief example of the religious and moral anarchy of the age, not to mention its intellectual anarchy as well. In the latter regard, Figgis recognized Nietzsche, along with Bergson and others, as playing an important part in the revolt against the general acceptance of nineteenth century idealism and the maxim of Hegel that the hidden secret of the universe must be penetrable to thought.

"A Plea for Otherworldliness" was the title of a sermon which Figgis delivered before the University of Cambridge, November 10, 1907. In it he said:

1. Ibid., p. 289.

2. Ibid., p. 292.

3. Ibid., pp. 292-293, quoting Beyond Good and Evil, p. 146.

I desire to-day to examine the charge often brought against the Church of being other-worldly. That charge is true. But it is our glory, not our shame. There is a sense, of course, in which the Church ought to be this-worldly. This sense, however, is so obvious, and is emphasised so much just now, that it is perhaps more profitable to dwell for a little upon the other aspect of the truth.....¹

"A Plea for Otherworldliness" is more than a sermon title; it is the key to Neville Figgis's entire theological emphasis. In the pages that follow--be the subject that of Figgis's estimate of the task of the theologian, his criticism of the idols of the modern mind, his emphasis on Christian experience, his insistence on the importance of the miraculous, his presentation of the Person of Christ, his discussion of the need for social reform, his critique of culture, or his love for the church and her sacraments--explicit and implicit through it all is the "plea for other-worldliness."

The very last thing that will attract is a Christianity with the supernatural left out.....Christianity which is what Mr. Wells called "muffled" will have no appeal.²

That faith of the Cross it is that alone can satisfy, and it is, while akin to the other faiths, more unlike them than like, and while in moral exhortation not unlike the nobler philosophies, at bottom something different from any, something more splendid, more difficult, more unfathomable, because its essence and its ground are other-worldly, its God One who is also man, and its supreme act the execution of a criminal.³

Figgis is an interesting exception, although not the only exception, to a statement made by John Baillie in And The Life Everlasting:

There can be little doubt that, if we have regard to the leaders

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1. Figgis, The Gospel and Human Needs, "A Plea for Other-worldliness," p. 120.
 2. Figgis, The Will to Freedom, pp. 306-307.
 3. Figgis, Civilisation at the Cross Roads, p. 120.

of thought both within and without the churches, it is not in the years since the Great War, but rather in the years immediately preceding it, that the receding tide of Christian other-worldliness reached its lowest ebb.¹

Figgis, himself, did not presume to be the only religious thinker who saw the importance of emphasizing the supernatural.

Professor Denny[&], Professor Burkitt, Dr. Forsyth, Dr. Garvie, Dr. Orr, Dr. Seeberg, Dr. Knowling, Mr. Wilfrid Ward, Mr. Gilbert Chesterton, the Bishops of Birmingham and Durham, Evangelical Dissenters and Ultramontanes may seem a rather heterogeneous company. Doubtless many of them would condemn as woefully inadequate the theology that contents the other. Yet all have this in common. They have crossed the Rubicon. All are on the other side of the line which divides the natural from the supernatural theory of the origin of Christianity.²

To Figgis's mind, the task of the theologian was the presentation of a unique, supernatural Christianity. In one of his many published sermons, he says:

Every age has its own task. Part of that task is always to correct the exaggerations of its immediate predecessor.³

Figgis saw the task of the modern theologian, working against the background of the previous age's overemphasis on Christianity's similarity to other modes of thought and belief, to consist in asserting the uniqueness of the Christian faith. He insisted that what he called the "Alexandrian Age" of asserting the assimilations between Christianity and other systems, such as the vogue of the ^{comparative} study of ~~comparative~~ religion^s, was past. This approach was allowable in an age when it was a battle between materialism and other

1. Baillie, John, And The Life Everlasting, (London, Oxford University Press, (1934)), p. 15.

2. Figgis, Civilisation at the Cross Roads, pp. 192, 193.

3. Figgis, Antichrist, pp. 162, 163.

thought contending for the importance of the things of the spirit, but an approach which loses its appeal in an age of competing religions.

The accent ought to be not on the likeness, but on the difference of Christianity from its rivals, whether philosophic or ethical or religious. After all, we are Christians not because our faith resembles that of other men, but because it does not. We shall but confuse our minds if we harp on the superficial resemblances, real though they may be. If the differences were not important it were wiser to combine with the great mass of the religious-minded, and sink or minimise all the strangeness, the unique charm of the Gospel, the things that are at once its appeal and its shame.¹

We have passed through an age best termed Alexandrian, when men have been concerned to shew the assimilations between Christian and other systems and have almost forgotten the difference in the process. So much alive have they been to the human environment that they have neglected to emphasize the divine origin of the Gospel. Now, it seems, we need rather a Tertullianist or Augustinian presentment of the faith insisting more on its difference from, than its approximation to, other systems; on the vital change it brought, rather than on the connection, however undoubted, with the old; on the gift of a new life, that makes it what it is. Both sides are true; what might be roughly called the Greek, or the Johannine view of things, and the Latin or the Pauline; at this moment it is the latter that we need to bring into relief.²

As doggedly as Figgis insisted that the task of the theologian in his own day was to assert the uniqueness of the orthodox faith, which is given "symbolic" expression in the ancient creeds, still he acknowledged and affirmed the importance of attempting to relate the faith of the Church to the results of modern discovery.

While holding fast to the "Eternal Gospel," there is before us in this age the task, not yet accomplished, of adjusting to a theology framed in another intellectual climate, a new view of the Bible, enlarged conceptions of history, and deeper knowledge of the natural world and of the mind of man. "Mediating

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1. Figgis, The Gospel and Human Needs, Preface p. viii.
 2. Figgis, Civilisation at the Cross Roads, pp. 169-170.

liberalism" is perhaps the best term in which to describe the attitude of wisdom; for that implies a real reverence for the heritage that is ours, together with an alert openness to what is new. Do not, however, let us suppose there is no problem, or deny changes which are real.¹

The fact that Figgis was an exponent of a "Mediating liberalism" which would relate the faith received to new discoveries wherein they had a legitimate claim to attention is not to be mistaken for a sanctioning of the movement in Roman Catholicism which was known as Modernism and which, in Protestant circles, came under the heading of the "New Theology."

Important, if not chief among the spokesmen for Modernism in England was George Tyrell, who looked upon Christ's ascension, His descent into hell, His coming to judge the quick and the dead, and other equally important assertions as "non-essential accidents." For him the New Testament account of Christ was largely poetic rather than scientific. The modern task of theology, as he envisioned it, was to distinguish the scientific from the poetic and the essential from the non-essential. Tyrell's Christianity at the Cross Roads gave expression to such views and received much attention; and although Figgis, in his preface to his book, Civilisation at the Cross Roads, the series of four lectures delivered before Harvard University in 1911 on the William Noble Foundation,² denies that

1. Figgis, The Fellowship of the Mystery, pp. 96-97.

Figgis looked upon that rebuttal of liberal views written by Ronald Knox and appearing under the title, Some Loose Stones, as a "brilliant but unsatisfactory work," because it assumed the attitude of denying the problems that modern thought raised for orthodoxy.

2. In a letter dated April 4, 1949, Norman B. Nash, Bishop of the Diocese of Boston, wrote regarding Figgis's delivery of the Noble Foundation Lectures: "I went to the first lecture, in which Leopold King of the Belgians was brilliantly depicted as the typical modern man, to the mirth and

his desire is to "controvert the main thesis of the late Father Tyrrell's famous work," no small portion of the lectures controverts Figgis's denial.

He begins his first lecture:

Not long since a writer, who seemed to wield flame rather than words, directed all our thoughts to the topic of Christianity at The Cross Roads. And indeed the tragedy of Tyrrell's own life (Tyrrell became almost a complete sceptic before his death) symbolised that crisis in thought of which the book was the expression. More than any of his works was his life an illustration of the momentous problems urgent at this moment on all reflecting men. How far can the new wine of modern knowledge and changed ways of thought be poured into the old bottles of traditional religion?¹

And in the third lecture he writes:

The assumption at the basis of George Tyrrell's Christianity at the Cross Roads seems to be that wherever Christianity conflicts with our modern mental scheme, it must be trimmed to make the two square. This view seems to be quite without ground. Neither facts nor theory justify our holding the dogma of the infallibility of the modern Western mind. Its most acute representatives do not claim this infallibility, and the intellectual anarchy of our day reveals its inadequacy.²

In a final blast against the Modernist spirit in general and as epitomized by Tyrrell in particular, Figgis says in the second and last appendix to The Fellowship of the Mystery, entitled "Modernism versus Modernity":

Modernism, if we are to use the word to denote this complex of movements, is regarded with unfavourable eyes on these grounds: that it is not modern in spirit, but depends largely on a view of things that is obsolete; that it is in fact Victorian; that it is not liberal, but involves notions inimical to spiritual

astonishment of a very small audience, including as I recall President Lowell. To my recollection the group was in considerable proportion composed of faculty members and graduate students, with a very few undergraduates. Being personally fascinated by Father Figgis' verbal brilliance and by his viewpoint, then quite novel to me, I went to all the lectures."

1. Figgis, Civilisation at the Cross Roads, p. 3.

2. Ibid., p 171.

freedom; that it is not popular, but aristocratic in its religious sympathies; not national, but academic; and that its whole mental outlook, so far from being broad, is restricted;--while to the most potent voices of the religious spirit it is deaf, and to the visions of Eternal wonder it is blind.

If the modernists should succeed for a couple of generations in establishing the claim of men like Tyrrell, and in preserving all the old values while broadening the basis, such success would not prove that they were right; but it would win them sympathy. So far, they have failed to do this; and that failure has much to teach us! ¹

The fact that Figgis was a competent historian helped him to be suspicious of ascribing an absolute value to the intellectual predilections of any one age. In his lecture, "The Value of the Study of History," which he delivered in 1895, and the full implications of which he came to appreciate only after the century had turned, he said:

It (the study of history) transports him (the historical student) into times alien in spirit from his own, and causes him to breathe the varying intellectual atmosphere of other ages. Introduced thus to other points of view than those now current, and compelled to look at widely different modes of thought and action from those immediately around him, he cannot fail to observe that the most accepted modern principles, the alphabet of our political and social education, were unknown or scornfully rejected among peoples not uncivilised. He sees that right reason has meant different things at different times, and that a man might be highly developed, and have all his energies generously employed, without his being a worshipper of our idols of the market-place. This, indeed, is no proof that current maxims are untrue, still less that they are undesirable guides under our peculiar conditions. But the student of history will scarcely look upon them in the same light as do those, who have imbibed their principles with their mother's milk, and would as soon think of doubting them as of denying that the sun shone in heaven.²

Part of the challenge of Modernism and part of the responsibility

1. Figgis, The Fellowship of the Mystery, "Modernism Versus Modernity," (Appendix B), pp. 298-299.

2. J. N. Figgis, "The Value of Historical Study"--a Lecture--Delivered before the Kettering Branch of the National Union of Teachers, (January 31, 1895).

of the "Mediating liberalism," which he championed, Figgis saw to be the restatement and translation of Christian dogma for twentieth century man without, at the same time, surrendering that which is divine in it.

Let us take away from our mode of presentment all that makes it harder than need be for the men of our day to discern the truth that the answer to all their restless longings is in one place only, Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.¹

In one regard it seems folly to set forth our faith afresh, if we hold to historic creeds and believe ourselves the guardians of a "faith once delivered." Yet such effort is not to be avoided, unless at the cost of the entire deadness of what to us is the most living of all things. Were it not possible to bring faith into relation to the world, as it lives now within us, it must sink (on its intellectual side) into the utterance of empty formulae, which once were flames of the spirit and have since become dried into words, and--with such conditions--would ere long be no more than sounds.²

What we do well to remember--I speak as a Churchman to Churchmen--is this: we cannot ourselves escape the need of restatement, and we are always making it, whether consciously or not. To doubt of this is to doubt the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church. While we must hold that God has given to every age of the Christian Church all things needful to its salvation, it is not faith, but the denial of faith, to suppose that all was fixed finally and for ever by the close of the fourth General Council or by the sixth century, or by the thirteenth, or by the sixteenth, or by any other. If we can commit blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, surely we shall be doing something very like it if we deny that He is speaking through God's Church in the twentieth century. Only let us bear in mind also that He spoke in the first, and will speak in the twenty-first. Heirs of all the ages, let us be slaves of none--not even our own.³

In the above words, the reader detects something more than a sense of responsibility to recouch the creeds of the Councils of the early church in modern language. Here may be found a deep attachment for Newman's Doctrine of Development every bit as real as his deep affection for the man as a person

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1. Figgis, The Fellowship of the Mystery, p. 8.
 2. Ibid., p. 5.
 3. Ibid., p. 6-7.

and a writer. Figgis writes of the leader of the Tractarian Movement who turned to Rome:

Further, he saw that in order to justify the developed scheme of Catholic theology, something more than logical argument is needed. This he found in the fact of life. His development of doctrine is an essay in creative evolution. It seeks to show that, since life is ceaseless movement and energy, we must apply dynamics rather than statics to our criticism of the Church. All that the inquirer needs is to satisfy himself that the Church, as she now appears, is the actual development of the Christian society of early days; that it is but the oak of which the meeting in the upper room was the acorn. I think that it is not always clear whether Newman intended by his development a truly "creative evolution," or merely the explication necessary to the original idea. Tyrrell charged against him the narrower view. But although, writing when he did, he may well have confused the two, his whole temper made in favour of that view of the life of the Church as essentially creative, with which M. Bergson has made us all familiar in regard to the universe as a whole. In spite of its defects and the looseness of the tests he applies, Newman's Development of the Christian Doctrine, together with Mohler's Symbolik, remains a most valuable asset of Catholic apologetic.¹

It is not unfair to Figgis to say that he had considerable sympathy with the bias in Newman's "Essay on Development" in the direction of justifying the general development of the Roman position. Figgis's main bone of contention with Rome was its doctrine of authority, which, in the realm of church government, is enshrined in ultramontaniam and, in the realm of conscience, in infallibilism. He asserted that Newman did not share the idea of authority which is inherent in the Papal Curia. Having cleared Newman of any such sympathy and having given in evidence Newman's essay on "Consulting the Laity," Figgis writes enthusiastically of those elements in the Roman church which were equally attractive to him as to Newman.

1. Ibid., pp. 256-257.

Nor was it that (the Ultramontane) element that really attracted him (Newman). It was the Catholic religion, the great human-divine thing, the collective conscience of humanity, the central fact in spiritual experience, with its majesty of immemorial tradition and the pathos of a million tears, the great community of the saints, and the martyrs, and the mystics, and the sinners, with its roots in the past and its strong social bonds: that was the really compelling charm to a man of Newman's temperament. Little wonder that, things being as they were, he could find this only in the Roman obedience;¹

Just how much sympathy Figgis had with the Roman communion may be seen from his comment in a series of sermons on "Our Catholic Inheritance."

Whether any other matters, (other than ultramontanism or infallibilism) such as the doctrine of the Eucharist or the Immaculate Conception, or various extravagances in popular devotion or practical abuses, would be sufficient, apart from his, to justify our separation, I do not know. Perhaps they would not.²

Just how far, in spite of all his sympathies with Rome and in spite of his discontent with much of the Anglican church, the claim to an absolute monarchy within the church upon earth kept him from entering the Roman fold may be seen in a further quotation from his article on Newman:

...how strangely they deceive themselves who think that, exchanging "the Anglican paddock" for the Roman campagna, they exchange slavery for freedom. Whatever may be the defects and difficulties of our English Church, "its freezing coldness" in parts, its smug officialism, the complacent atmosphere redolent of the cathedral precincts and the clergyman's wife:--all of these things, which stank in Newman's nostrils, may still, in some sense, be with us. We may still have much to learn from Rome in regard to the place of the poor in the Christian Church, and the recovery of many things which have nearly vanished under the arid tyranny of the "Aufklärung." For all that, the actual working of the Vatican machinery is controlled by a narrow and jealous camarilla, as incapable of generosity as it is ignorant of true religion. Unworthy to black the boots of a man like Newman, they did their best to shut his mouth. The tragedy of

1. Figgis, The Fellowship of the Mystery, "John Henry Newman," (Appendix A.), p.p. 248-249.

2. J. N. Figgis, Hopes for English Religion, (London, Longmans, Green and Co., 1919), p. 72.

Newman's life--and it was a tragedy--is the tragedy of the saint and the genius, thwarted by the spirit of worldly officialism and unsympathetic autocracy.¹

So strong was Figgis's feeling against the Roman church regarding this whole matter of authority that he thought the young ordinand who was assisting him at Marnhull and who left him to enter the Roman priesthood had lost his mind. As strong as his sympathies were for the worship of the Roman church, he confessed to one of his associates that rather than become a Roman catholic he would join the smallest sect in Christendom. And although Figgis did not approve of the kind of Liberalism and Modernism which directly evoked the Papal Denunciation by Pious X in 1907, he looked upon such methods as typical of Roman autocracy and as a threat to all significant theological thought and discussion.

Returning, however, to the general discussions of Figgis's estimate of Modernism, both as to the service it could perform and the abuses to be avoided, Figgis saw in Newman's kind of Modernism that to which he would affix his stamp of approval, the stamp of a true Mediating liberalism.

He (Newman) is rightly regarded as the source of Modernism, in the sense that he discarded the scholastic method of proof, and as the originator of a doctrine of development without which it is not really possible to justify the Church. What he actually did was to bring religion under the category of life, instead of treating it as an aggregate of propositions to which assent is demanded on grounds intellectually coercive. But Newman was in no sense a Modernist, if by that be meant one who is content with only the present value of a system and confuses its truth with its worth, or one who treats as of slight importance the historical character of the New Testament narratives.²

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1. Figgis, The Fellowship of the Mystery, "John Henry Newman," pp. 238-239.
 2. Ibid., p. 248.

Because he was alert to the constructive elements in the Modernist Movement, because he had the power to be objective about the kind of thinking which had either jeopardized or ministered to the health of his own sensitive religious spirit, and because he was a competent historian, Figgis saw that the experience of the Christian faith is what gives credence to it rather than any intellectual act and that our experience of it determines our attitude toward the whole body of faith. The chief credential of Christianity is the experience of it, an experience which by its very nature is supernatural.

There is nothing proved, no principle even probable, which stands in the way of Christian faith. There is no "a priori" obstacle to the faith, provided that it seem on other grounds to be reasonable. Such grounds are to be found in the New Testament experience as solid with the life of the Church and the inward witness of the believer.¹

The problem, then, is one as to the transcendental or the normal character of this experience or group of experiences; the central facts as recorded in the New Testament, the impression made by them at the time, and the continuance of that impression in the Church and its individual members.²

A statement made by Frank Weston about the ancient creeds would have met with Figgis's approval.

1. Figgis, Civilisation at the Cross Roads, p. 63.

2. Ibid., p. 198.

It is obvious from what is here said that in his stress upon the importance of religious experience, Figgis is not an apologist for the kind of mysticism which neglects the experience of faith enshrined in the long history of the church or which makes little of historical revelation. It was this kind of mysticism in the writings of Evelyn Underhill and also of Dean Inge, whom Figgis disliked anyway, that Figgis spoke out against. He felt that mysticism of this type represented movements begun as hobbies by people of a particular type, that they were therefore exclusive and undemocratic in nature, representing a certain coterie of interest.

The witness of the Apostolic writers and the great Christian teachers is to the Christologian a testimony based not merely upon reason, but also upon experience. The definitions of the Councils are the official summary of the private personal experiences of multitudes of faithful souls during a period of some four hundred years, an experience that the Christian body of every age has ratified and confirmed.¹

Part and parcel of this emphasis on experience is the assertion that men do not arrive at conclusions about the supernatural character of Christianity from the consideration of certain creeds or isolated supernatural events. Faith is the experience which carries its own proof with it, an experience which once attained, men argue from rather than towards.

It is right to put the question in this broad manner, as one which is concerned with our view of the nature of the experience as a whole. We are putting the cart before the horse, when we argue, as though the question were first and foremost concerned with dogma. Dogma only brings out the implications of the supernatural view, and it cannot be arrived at independently or argued about as consisting of so many isolated propositions. The Creeds are the intellectual expressions of this faith, developed in the life of the Church, and they guard its essential nature, which is to be supernatural. It is this supernatural character which is its "differentia." On this we have to make up our mind before, not after, we consider the Creeds. The enquirer must decide whether or no these supernatural claims were made, and then whether he can accept them.²

As a fact, we are dealing not with a number of isolated events apparently marvelous, each to be discussed "in vacuo," but with a great experience of human life extending from the converted sinner of today right back to "that strange man upon the Cross" and all that He implies. The question is, What does that experience mean? Even in regard to the New Testament it is a mistake to adopt this purely analytic method. It is not the Virgin Birth, or the Empty Tomb, or the Transfiguration, or the feeding of the five thousand, or the walking on the water, or the tremendous claims of Christ, or the stories of the Apostles, or the experience of St. Paul, or the theory of St. John; it is all these things to-

1. Wilfred L. Knox and Alec R. Vidler, The Development of Modern Catholicism, (Milwaukee, Morehouse Publishing Co., (1933)), quoting The One Christ, p. 204.

2. Figgis, Civilisation at the Cross Roads, pp. 193-194.

gether. Or, to be accurate, it is the atmosphere, the mental world, in which all these things take place, that is in question.¹

The man who, as a historian, insisted that no category of life could be truly measured apart from an appreciation of surrounding categories, no person or event understood except in context, no period understood apart from an investigation of the years which preceded and followed was not likely to recommend the treatment of creed or event of religious significance in isolation. For him the only category which could give such things meaning, relevance, and the stamp of truth was the context of religious experience, both personal and as embodied in the continuing life of the Christian church.

Figgis was keenly aware, in keeping with his emphasis on the deductive rather than the inductive method in matters of faith, that arguments in behalf of the historicity of certain significant events in the New Testament are not adequate in themselves to give rise to the conviction in men's minds that these things actually took place.

All belief in alleged historical facts depends partly on the actual evidence, partly on a presupposition that the facts are not in themselves and under certain conditions improbable—i.e. on a faith in a certain order of things, with which such facts are congruous.²

But in the case of miraculous or very abnormal occurrences the consensus "a priori" as to what is likely does not exist and never will exist, so far as I can see; and hence the evidence alone is not and never can be sufficient to convince every one that such events have occurred, and we do wrong in expecting a degree of certainty which, from the nature of the case, is unattainable. The more abnormal or unique any event is the larger

1. Ibid., p. 199.

2. Figgis, The Gospel and Human Needs, p. 62.

part must be played in the belief by our sense of its being likely; and the greater divergences of opinion must therefore exist as to the value or origin of the evidence. I think, therefore, that they greatly err who hope to found the Christian religion on a certain basis by pure historical inquiry.¹

I have heard that an eminent historian considers that our Lord's resurrection is a fact of history as certain as the death of Julius Caesar. With all respect I submit that this view is untenable and is disproved by the very large number of instructed persons who disbelieve in the one, while of the other there is practically no doubt whatever. Belief in the resurrection of Christ cannot be possible, apart from certain presuppositions as to what the world means or may mean, which enable a man to view the evidence sympathetically. ... On the other hand, to a Christian believer who has both examined and approved the evidence and has appropriated to himself the presence of the living Christ in the Church of the Eucharist, the resurrection may seem a fact infinitely more certain than an event like the death of Julius Caesar, which strikes him as merely external fact.²

Although Figgis did ridicule the notion that one could be convinced of the historicity of certain momentous events surrounding the Person and life of Christ on the basis of historical evidence apart from certain presuppositions that would indicate that they were highly probable, still he did not make little of historical criticism nor of the achievements in that realm of such men as Westcott and Hort.³

1. Ibid., p. 62.

2. Ibid., p. 63.

On one occasion at a meeting of clergy, Figgis, in referring to a recent book, The Resurrection, the Most Certain Fact in History, went on to say, "The man who can write a book with a title like that doesn't know what he is talking about." Unfortunately, the author was in the frontrow.

3. It is interesting to see Figgis in The Church Quarterly Review for October 1903-January 1904, page 101, Volume LVII, in the article entitled, "A Puritan Utopia," exercising himself in the discipline of historical criticism pertaining neither to the Bible nor to politics. In stating his own reasons for believing that The Ideal City of Jerusalem Regained was written by John Milton in this article reviewing Walter Begley's translation of the work with a similar assumption, Figgis shows himself to be a keen student of history even beyond the sphere of his main interests.

There is no fact related of Christ, which does not require to be examined, and our knowledge of Him rests on certain documentary evidence and traditions, which must be interrogated like all other historical testimony.¹

We cannot, however tempted, separate a rational belief in Christianity from the careful investigation of its early records. The century now past has been greatly busied in this matter, and I need not here do more than refer to the work of the scholars who made Cambridge famous in European learning, From the crucible of severe investigation to which the New Testament has been subjected two facts appear to issue with some certainty. Nothing in this investigation has resulted which hinders the sound scholar from Nicene Christianity apart from other hostile presuppositions.²

But then he reasserts:

On the other hand, it is abundantly clear from the mere observation of facts that historical criticism of itself and alone is not sufficient to induce certainty in the minds of those who, on other grounds, assume the impossibility of the miraculous.³

For some years the writer lived, however humbly, in the academic world. That experience made two things apparent: (a) the importance of the contribution of criticism; (b) the fact that it is no more than a contribution, one factor among many others, all of which must be taken into account.⁴

In a footnote Figgis quotes Westcott himself in support.

"Miracles and prophecies considered separately and in detail are not the proper proof of Christianity, but as parts of this whole testimony of experience they have an effective power. Historical testimony originates and commends a religion but it does not establish it."⁵

Just as Figgis was aware that something like certainty about the supernatural beginnings of Christianity could not be enjoyed apart from

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1. Figgis, Christianity and History, p. 47.
 2. Figgis, The Gospel and Human Needs, p. 60.
 3. Ibid., p. 61.
 4. Figgis, The Fellowship of the Mystery, "Modernism Versus Modernity," (Appendix B), p. 290.
 5. Figgis, The Gospel and Human Needs, "Notes to the Hulsean Lectures," (Appendix), p. 186, quoting Gospel of Life, p. 304.

favourable presuppositions, he was also persistent in pointing out that conclusions against their probable historicity also arise out of certain presuppositions, certain skeptical presuppositions of the kind employed by the liberal German school of historical critics. Warning against a hypercritical approach to history, Figgis writes:

The sober historian must always beware of the desire to transmute his material, and remember that the hypercritical attitude of mind must inevitably lead not merely to the denial of religious stories but of all history.¹

For the very reason that Figgis was a deductive rather than an inductive thinker, because he approached from an experience of the whole rather than from acquaintance with detail, he was really out of line with the Cambridge mentality in general and its theological mentality in particular, and that, in spite of the fact that Cambridge was his educational home and that he too had taken the mathematical tripos in 1888. The conflict becomes obvious in light of the following interesting observation appearing in The Church Quarterly Review:

Hard indeed is it to exaggerate the unconscious way in which the Cambridge mind is influenced by the now almost remote past when the sole avenue to academic distinction was "the Tripos," as the mathematical examination was always styled.

Classical studies themselves were until recently moulded by mathematical ideals. The knowledge of the historian and the thoughtfulness of the philosopher were held in slight estimation compared to the rigid accuracy of the "pure classic." The fame of the classical tripos rested on the impossibility of mere ingenuity, originality, or brilliancy blinding the eyes of the examiners to the fact that the candidate was a slovenly or inaccurate scholar. Its most finished product was a mathematician who had devoted his attention to the ancient languages. And now, though "the Tripos" has fallen from its high estate, though far more men read for natural science

1. Figgis, Christianity and History, pp. 44-45.

than mathematical honours, though new triposes are constantly springing up, the old spirit is still alive and active. Thus it comes to pass that modern theology is still at Cambridge under the spell of the old mathematical tripos. Naturally it looks to facts rather than fancies, and many Cambridge men have a strong disposition to consider textual criticism as the most important branch of divinity.¹

From what has been said, it is obvious that Figgis was critical rather than in favour of such an emphasis. An added indication of Figgis's attitude toward the Cambridge overemphasis on the side of historical criticism may be seen in his comment in the "London Times" on the controversy over whether or not men with no particular Christian sympathies should be awarded the Cambridge D. D. degree for their research in the field of Biblical history and linguistics.

Should agnostics be permitted to take the D. in D.? That, as the master of St. Catherine's truly said, is the plain issue. Unlike him I am ready to say yes. In the present condition of opinion in the university and the highly technical nature of the exercises often accepted as theses in theology, no good purpose is served by confining the degree to clergymen or even to Christians. if the change be made (giving the degree to non-believers) the doctorate will be without any presuppositions at all and a recognition for learning on the topic of religion considered as a human phenomenon. This being so, there can be no ground for confining it to Christianity, and the degree ought to be equally obtainable for an exercise in Confucius or Buddah, without any reference at all to the Christian church. Once this change is accepted, we shall cease to be in a false position in the matter, and I am willing to accept its obvious correlaries. Possibly, though not probably, it may have some slight effect in inducing the leaders of the theological school to devote more attention to the fundamental problems of belief instead of their existing immersion in critical and linguistic studies which are only by courtesy to be called theology.²

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1. "Religion in Cambridge," The Church Quarterly Review, CIX, (October 1902).
 2. J. N. Figgis, "Letter-to-the-Editor," London Times, (November 21, 1912), 13.

Sir William Spens wrote in his Belief and Practice:

What then are the data for those who appeal to religious experience? In the first place a very general experience of certain needs and capacities, and the possibility of their satisfaction.¹

This statement serves to describe a large part of Figgis's apologetic.

The Gospel and Human Needs, the name given by Figgis to the Hulsean Lectures delivered by him before the University of Cambridge in 1908, to a large and attentive audience, provides a suitable caption for a large part of Figgis's whole emphasis. The most significant thing for the Christian faith is that it satisfies more adequately than any other allegiance man's basic needs and longings.

Mr. Bernard Shaw, in one of the most impressive of his many helpful and impressive utterances, made Undershaft declare that we have had enough of shams, and must at last demand a religion that fits the facts. I agree. It is because Christianity fits the facts, and helps us to live as real beings in a real world, and not as the puppets of fate or even as the dreamers of an earthly Paradise, that it will outlast all the systems of criticism, philosophy, or morals, which arise one after another, plausible and dazzling in one decade, and disappear in the next, futile as the "snows of yesteryear."²

For this gift taken in its fulness--eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord--ministers to three permanent, irreducible needs of the soul; the need for intimacy between man's spirit and the eternal, which is met by the life in Christ; the need for a voice from the world beyond, assuring him of a life beyond life, and the conservation of value; and the need for deliverance, for some hope of redemption of a world which cries loudly for salvation and can be satisfied with nothing less than a Redeemer.³

The claim of the Gospel is not so much to solve problems as to come near to human lives. It is to man, as he lives and works,

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1. Knox and Vidler, op. cit., p. 231, quoting Belief and Practice.
 2. Figgis, The Gospel and Human Needs, p. x.
 3. Figgis, The Fellowship of the Mystery, p. 22.

as he fights and sins, as he loves and hopes, as he feels the need of outside support to sustain him in his weakness, of Love from Beyond to console him in his gloom, of social institutions and environments to prevent his spirit being crushed by the world or throttled by comfort, that the Christ appeals, To everyday men and women, with the pettiness and stains of sordid vulgar life, but also with the tenderness and heroism never far from any lover, never unknown to parent or child, to these it is that the Christian Church makes its appeal, resting on definite facts issuing in clear statements, and ministering gifts real but supernatural.¹

In the very helpful book, The Development of Modern Catholicism, these words appear:

On the other hand Modernism had grasped a point of vital importance in realizing that Christianity must be defended as a whole system, expressing the complete religious experience of man, not as a series of isolated dogmas depending on immediate divine revelation, or deductions following from revelation with conclusive certainty. It is only in virtue of our acceptance of Christianity as a whole that we can see either the reasonableness of particular doctrinal statements, or the value of the historical element in Christianity. The fact is obscured to those who have grown up in a Christian atmosphere, where the truth of Christianity and the value of religious practice is assumed so unquestioningly that we are not conscious that the assumption has ever been made. We mistake the rationalization of the Christian experience in the form of theology for the reasons which lead us to believe. It is noticeable that in Lux Mundi the argument from experience is occasionally used to reinforce other arguments, but in general it is supposed that the facts of history or the dogmatic system of Christianity are the grounds from which belief follows, rather than the attempt to explicate a religious experience which is already accepted or at least desired. Here the contribution of Modernism to the understanding of the psychology of Christian belief and the function of theology in regard to it has been of lasting importance.²

Because he sympathized with the Modernist point of view to the extent that he saw the importance of approaching and defending the Christian faith as a

1. Ibid., p. 74.

For an elaboration from Figgis's own experience of "the partial, relatively superficial character of intellectual processes...at the crises of life" -- supra. p. 12.

2. Knox and Vidler, op. cit., pp. 181-182.

whole system, because he, like the Modernist, fully appreciated the importance of the argument from experience, good cause is given to those who seek to discover Figgis's place in the theological movements of his time to recognize him as one of the second generation Anglo-Catholics, like T. A. Lacey, G. C. Rawlinson, and Will Spens, who, while receiving much of their stimulus and inspiration from the "Lux Mundi" group, were yet distinct from it in these and other significant ways.

Figgis concluded his last lecture on The Gospel and Human Needs with:

"Credo quia impossibile."¹

He felt compelled to speak boldly, convinced as he was that he was living in a time which was witnessing a recrudescence of the sentimental rationalism of the eighteenth century.

It is a similar phenomenon we witness to-day. All around us we see new theologies, up-to-date catechisms, common-sense religions, re-births, restatements, some profound, some a little crude, all rather depressing. From London and New York and Birmingham, not to speak of the Continent, books pour from the press which are all directed by the same bias.

We are to learn the permanent value of Christian faith by stripping it of every wonder and every mystery. We are to reject the strange birth as materialistic, the physical resurrection as unscientific, sacramental grace as magical--above all, the deity of our Lord disappears in a cloud of phrases; and all the Churches are invited to join in a "caput mortuum" of pious sentiment and pantheistic emotion. In brief, we are to capitulate to the enemy on every controverted point except the general need of religion and prayer, and then to trust to the God of philosophy to come down "from the machine" and


1. Figgis, The Gospel and Human Needs, p. 119.

Keble Talbot of the Community of the Resurrection recalls that Figgis walked with him for an hour one afternoon, trying to decide whether or not to end his lectures in this fashion.

save from the wrecks of ecclesiasticism just enough to suit men of parts and of polish, while throwing to the wolves the poor man's God, who wrought wonders and rose from the tomb.¹

You cannot search for religion merely from the side of intellectual inquiry and arrive at a Christian result. It is impossible. For the intellect demands necessity, and freedom is the postulate of the Gospel.²

You cannot serve God and Mammon with the mind any more than with the heart. Somewhere there comes the choice between worshipping God and idolising your own mind.³

Figgis felt a great attraction to  Bergson, whom he recognized as a "supremely acute observer of this life" and whom he admired for his insight into the fact that "the intellect is by its nature incapable of comprehending life."⁴ Figgis held no brief for the traditional arguments in support of belief in God. To attempt to use them in modern apologetics he considered akin to entering upon modern warfare with bows and arrows.

We cannot, indeed, too deeply take to heart the lesson impressed from without by Kant and even Herbert Spencer, and from within by Pascal and Newman--that we cannot find God merely by the understanding, that there is no coercive proof of His being, and that all our terms to express Him are but symbols and figures. No longer do men attach absolute value to what are merely inadequate formulae, or waste energy over rational proofs. These things are

1. *Ibid.*, pp. 29-30.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 33.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 42.

4. A reviewer of Figgis's The Fellowship of the Mystery draws an interesting and not inaccurate parallel between Figgis and Bergson: "It may, in fact, be said that the philosophy of Bergson and the theology of Dr. Figgis are two important symptoms of the forces which lie beneath the surface of these days. Both start from the conception of life; and, as Bergson explains the whole forces of the world in terms of life, so does Dr. Figgis apply the same conception to the doctrines and institutions of the Church. All the dogmas of Catholicism claim to be expressions of a living experience, and hence, without being final, they are valid and necessary. Rev. C. E. Rolt, "Father Figgis on The Fellowship of the Mystery," English Church Review, VI, (April 1915), pp. 159-160.

regulative, the best possible; they do but suggest, they cannot comprehend, that awful splendour of holiness which is far beyond word and thought, and like all personal differences can only be bridged by love and faithful souls.¹

We cannot demonstrate these matters any more than you can demonstrate to the solipsist the fact that there is a world beyond himself.²

Nor did Figgis care any more for Roman Catholic Scholasticism than he did for its ultramontaniam; and that on the ground of its excess intellectualism.

I think we can find in this temper part at least of the hostility to scholasticism and certain other aspects of Roman belief. We resent its hard outlines, its clear distinctions, its arrogance of certitude; while its attempt to secure an intellectually coercive proof of God's being strikes us as both ineffectual and unattractive. It is not valid; and if it were valid, it would destroy the very belief it proves, and it would make God inferior to our intelligence.³

The reader is not surprised to come upon the following round condemnation of idealism.

Idealism in various forms displays the inadequacy of mere rationalism, and develops what its adherents regard as unanswerable arguments for the spiritual nature of reality. A firm basis in reflection is thus believed to exist for theistic belief, and it is anticipated that these benefits will soon be universal when philosophic training is extended to all. This is a great act of faith, for neither the past nor the present position of philosophic controversies observed as facts afford much ground for any hope of general agreement. This temper often brings with it a refusal to consider as vital any belief not in this way acceptable to the philosopher, and develops the tendency to transmute religion into philosophy. It is often hostile or apathetic to all the historical elements in Christianity, and though quite compatible with orthodox belief, tends to treat religion mainly as a system of ideas, a luxury for the study rather than the lord of life and death. All these

1. Figgis, The Gospel and Human Needs, p. 51.

2. Figgis, The Fellowship of the Mystery, p. 24.

3. Figgis, The Gospel and Human Needs, p. 49.

methods spring from the same error--the desire to do away with the element of risk in faith, and a dislike of what is unfathomable to the intelligence. To all the forms of the new theology there is one common assumption--a "naïf" faith in the intellect of man.

This faith is not only improbable but is contradicted daily by the facts of life. If we were able by thinking to plumb the secrets of things, it is clear that no revelation is needed, nor could there be any place in religion for mystery, which in its very notion is something unfathomable. On this view it would be true, as Browning said in irony, that there is now a higher tribunal than God, the educated man, and the Christian religion must be made subject entirely to our intelligence, and shorn of all elements which transcend it.¹

Wherein an element of idealism figured in the thinking of the Oxford men of the "Lux Mundi" movement, Figgis was distinct from and critical of them. So it was that he lauded Dr. Bussell's Bampton Lectures, Christian Theology and Social Progress.

Dr. Bussell sought in fact to disengage the Christian system from its lamentable confusion with the lamentable form of the philosophic idealism at Oxford, which leads in so many cases to a repudiation of all the most distinctive notes of the Gospel and the obscuring of the beauty of God.²

To the defenders of the faith, Figgis sounds a precaution and a challenge:

The truth is that apologists are constantly tempted to concede the claims of their adversaries by arguing upon their assumptions, and these assumptions are inherently opposed to the Christian faith, as revealed and supernatural. If that faith be what it claims, its defenders have only one course open to them. They must help man's eyes to see the King in His beauty; must set forth the grace of Christian truth as the veritable splendour of

1. Ibid., pp. 36-37.

2. J. N. Figgis, "A Review of The Church and the World, being the Bampton Lectures for 1908 and 1909 by the Rev. Walter Hobhouse," The English Church Review, I, (September 1910), 400-405. (The article refers to other Bampton Lectures, including Dr. Bussell's).

God; and show that it is more congruous with life, as it is lived, than is any proffered substitute. I think that since the time of Descartes, the process I am condemning has been specially dominant.¹

At the heart of all objective and subjective reality, there is mystery; there is that which reason cannot invade and does not comprehend. Mystery seems to be part and parcel of the plain man's experience of life, and to this man (and it is always to this man that Figgis turns in his thinking), nothing is real, least of all religion, but shares this mystery. To remove the mysterious from religion would be to withdraw that which constitutes a large part of its appeal.

All nature may be movement, but does any one really understand motion or change? We are told that science has not yet explained one single fact, and in the simplest things in outward life we find a mystery unfathomable. But even though these were not the case, and the outerworld were quite within our intelligence, it is the inward life that is the real, and that is always a mystery, and speaks of something beyond.

Mystery is, in fact, no less needful than miracle in our world of thought to-day. The one saves us from a world of cast iron; the other from that profounder slavery of the mind to its own creations, from that superstition of the logical process, which is willing in its blindness to treat the real life of struggle and hope and joy as mere illusion, if only at the cost it may preserve its self-consistency. This is to make an idol out of an instrument. The perfection of theoretic harmony is dearly bought if life be the price we are to pay for it.

Mystery, which it is sought to eliminate from the creed, is of its very essence; for the creed is a "symbol" in its old name, the expression partial and inadequate of something greater--life. Man's sense of the greatness of things, of the profound wonder in his daily life, is too deep to be eradicated by any dialectic cleverness, and is proof against all the ridicule of philosophers.²

It all comes to this. The plain man's readiness to accept the mysteries of God's grace rests at once on his ignorance and his knowl-

1. Figgis, The Gospel and Human Needs, p. 35.

2. Ibid., pp. 38-40.

edge. He feels that in all things there is mystery, and that what is the constant factor of his inner being is somehow part of the stuff of the universe. He places no reliance at all upon the optimistic faith of men who, like Du Bois Reymond, look forward to the day when the world can be reduced to a mathematical formula; or in the more common assertion that the whole of being is penetrable to thought; for even the delight in a poem or a piece of music can prove the contrary. He knows that, though you may explain the world, he remains inexplicable to himself. On the other hand, he feels that there must be reality in that love and joy and willing resolve which are the deepest and most real things in his life. The Christian faith asserts this truth at once of the mystery of things, of the eternity of love, of the infinite worth of choice, as does no other creed. And this is its warrant.¹

To such an one belief in God is not dependent upon formal proof; like his own existence, it is a postulate, not a conclusion. Indeed, if God be, as we say, a loving Father, it is clear that our knowledge of Him cannot rest on a basis of reasoning; or it would be unlike our perception of any other personal relation.¹

It is to be added that Figgis's sense of the irrational, the mysterious at the core of all reality, as in the case of other aspects of his thinking which have been worth of special note, is partly indebted to his experience as a historian. In the heart of his lecture on "The Value of Historical Study," he says:

Philosophers in all ages have set themselves the task of reducing God's universe to system, and if they have succeeded in satisfying themselves, to the mind of the observer they have established nothing save that life is too large to be comprehended by a formula and that to form a theory of thinking that shall be catholic is possible only on the condition of its being nugatory. The logician may banish contradiction from his own views, but it remains inherent in the nature of things, and the last word of thought is surely this--that truth does not admit to expression except in paradoxes.²

Integral to an appreciation of Neville Figgis's contribution to religious thought under the general heading of "A Plea for Otherworldliness"

1. *Ibid.*, pp. 50-51.

2. Figgis, "The Value of Historical Study," p. 11.

is an understanding of the importance he places upon miracles. In the preface to The Gospel and Human Needs, he writes:

Not long since a friend said to me that miracles which had once been a support to faith were now a stumbling-block. I made the reply that that stage was at an end, and that once more they were becoming a help, were indeed of the essence of revelation. The following lectures are an attempt to explicate that dictum.¹

Expanding his claim that miracles are a help rather than an impediment to faith and that they belong to the essence of revelation (or in Westcott's words, "Miracles are more probably the circumstances than the proof of revelation"), Figgis hinged the very possibility of the existence of another world on the certainty that miracles happen.

...the question of miracles is really the question of the existence of a transcendent world. Does there exist behind the veil a Being or beings of spiritual nature with knowledge and powers more than human and able to influence our life in the world of sense? To deny this existence is to surrender the last vestige of the Christian doctrine of the other world. Yet if such beings have any relation at all with this life they must somehow or other cause that to happen which otherwise would not; and vice versa. When such events are normal in character we call them special providences. When they are not we call them miracles.²

Figgis does not approach the miraculous in Christianity from the standpoint of individual miracles. He does not suggest that isolated miracles are their own authentication nor that individual miracles bear the burden of the proof of Christianity as a supernatural religion; by the same token, neither will he permit the ridiculing of the miraculous element in the Christian tradition on the basis of a negative estimate of individual unnatural occurrences. One sees Figgis's previously considered deductive

1. Figgis, The Gospel and Human Needs, p. vii.

2. Figgis, Civilisation at the Cross Roads, "King Richard the Third and the Reverend James Thompson," (Appendix), p. 254.

rather than inductive approach in matters of faith as in matters of history, his insistence on an approach from the whole, pressed into service in his defense of the miraculous element in Christianity.

Here it is the total fact that has the character of miracle. It is there that we obtain that irresistible impression of witnessing an invasion of this world by powers from that beyond--a view which is only inadmissible provided the world as we see it be self-explanatory and complete. If this be not so, we cannot rule out beforehand the supernatural character of the Christian fact, and it is as parts of this alleged supernatural fact that the miracles are to be considered. They are not single and unrelated marvels, and yet that is the way in which criticism of this sort habitually treats them.¹

...a right judgment of the New Testament experience depends on our view of it as a whole. Is there not ground for believing that here we are in the presence of a mighty inrush from the power behind the phenomenal world, producing a coruscation of wonders? The more I read the New Testament, the more certain I am that this is the true interpretation of what the early Christians thought they were experiencing; and, unless some other considerations inhibit me, I should suppose that what they thought was justified in fact. I feel justified in holding that the experience is of that order best described as supernatural. If this be so, it is under the belief that the whole is a strange and miraculous occurrence that we analyse the particular items, and not vice versa.²

In keeping with his equating the Christian revelation with the miraculous, Figgis insisted that to concede the miraculous in Christianity is equivalent to conceding the Nicene doctrine. What makes this assertion the more interesting is his authentication of it on the basis of his own personal experience.

The Dean of Christ Church has recently shown how deeply the idea of the miraculous is involved in the Christian conception of God, and how, if we give up the one, we cannot hope for long to retain the other.

1. Ibid., p. 246.

2. Figgis, The Fellowship of the Mystery, "Modernism Versus Modernity," (Appendix B), p. 287.

Here, moreover, some can appeal to their own experience. We, who are unwilling to bow the knee to the new Baal, are not ignorant of his attractions; and some of us have passed through the fire.

From a personal knowledge one is able to state what has been the consequence of making these concessions, apparently so trifling. Speaking for the one person whose experience is certain to him, the writer can say this. For some time he gave up his belief in the Virgin Birth, or, to be accurate, he treated it as irrelevant; but he did not find it so. Slowly almost everything crumbled. Faith in the sacramental presence was not so much denied as practically forgotten. Harder and harder of credit became the great Christian doctrines--a dominant intellectualism seemed to cut away everything, not by argument, but by detaching faith from all living interest.¹

Every system of thought must take something on faith, must begin with some irreducible factor or reality which is not subject to being disproven, according to the system's proponent, something within which or out from which the rest of the system grows and upon which it depends. For Figgis, the central fact of experience is freedom. Freedom to him is that irreducible reality in life which is the stumbling block of systems which make little of it and the authenticity of those which take it sufficiently into account.²

1. *Ibid.*, pp. 293-294.

2. The large part which freedom plays in Figgis's religious experience and expression is doubtless related to the emphasis placed on freedom by his three most influential instructors in political thought: Creighton (who was also a strong religious influence), Maitland, and Acton. In the introduction which Figgis and Lawrence wrote to their compilation of Acton's correspondence, they said in reference to the centrality of the category of freedom in Acton's thinking: "What is certain is the unity of the main thoughts which governed Acton. That thought is the idea of freedom as an absolute end for all men. Freedom is not to Acton one among many human conditions to be balanced with others by the politician. Rather it is the governing principle of true statesmanship, the determining element in political thought, the criterion of all constitutions. The sense that freedom is a spiritual principle made for Acton a religion of politics." (Acton, *Sele-*

Freedom must be accepted as a given fact, mysterious like the primary facts of life.¹

Freedom is to me an immediate doctrine of consciousness, a primary fact, the most real thing in life. So much is it a part of my life that to deny this fact reduces it to ruins.²

Freedom, the noblest motive in human life, the highest aim of all true politics, the one foundation of moral development, the one source of all values and of every spiritual meaning--this is the Aladdin's Palace of everyman's desire to which Christ and Christ alone can give the open Sesame.³

Asserting it to be self-evident that man as a free agent by his actions can cause things to happen which otherwise would not have occurred, Figgis suggests the analogy that God, once conceived of as a free being, must also exercise a like power, miracles being but his free actions, the free actions of a personality whose mind and power are greater than the mind and power of man.

The real question between Christianity and its adversaries is concerned not with the miracles of Jesus, but with the possibility of human freedom. The antecedent difficulty which keeps men from Christian Faith is commonly understood to be this problem of the miraculous. This is true, but it is true only because miracles are a part of the larger issue between freedom and necessity. All along the line there is one and only one fundamental difficulty, that created by "scientific fatalism." It is clear that without some doctrine of human freedom the Christian scheme and the whole theory of sin and redemption is nonsense. What is less obvious is that once it be established that the acts of men are not all of them determined, the "a priori" argument against miracles is gone. Supposing our wills be free, we are spirits who choose and, acting frequently upon the material of nature, alter and interfere with its arrangements. We make that happen which apart from our free act would not happen. A miracle only

tions From the Correspondence of Lord Acton, p. xi. Speaking of the one great concern that these three men shared, Figgis said: "It is this faith in freedom which is in different forms the characteristic of them all....." Figgis, Churches in the Modern State, "Three Cambridge Historians: Creighton, Maitland, and Acton" (Appendix II), p. 230.

1. Figgis, Civilisation at the Cross Roads, p. 176.

2. Ibid., p. 175.

3. J. N. Figgis, "The Gospel of Freedom," The Guardian, (December 20, 1912), p. 1686.

asserts the same about a being or beings also free and with wider knowledge than ours. When God employs the forces of nature without any apparent interference, we call His act a special providence; when He brings forces into play which we cannot manipulate, we call the act a miracle. Both are equally involved in the conception of God's freedom, that is His personality.¹

....The whole problem turns on the reality of freedom, for that involves even in ourselves powers which may well be called supernatural. It is of course conceivable that there are no higher beings in the universe than we are. If that were so, of course miracles in the ordinary sense could not happen. But once grant that God is to be thought of as the free Being who created and controlled the world, then it is really less difficult to credit His action than our own; for we know very well that our life is dependent. Once grant, however, that our acts are free, or some of them, and the whole edifice of a system of rigid mechanism falls to the ground; and we must, at least, allow the possibility of such irruptions from the world beyond sight as are best called miraculous.²

If we have once surmounted the cardinal crux of human freedom, there is no real ground for boggling over miracles.³

Figgis placed so much emphasis on freedom and on the miraculous because he felt that the time and stream of popular thought in which he found himself demanded of the defender of revealed religion an emphasis on personal forces in the world and the universe which would counteract the tendency to confine faith and life within the prison house of mechanistic, deterministic thinking.

The contention of the Christian is that in the last resort all the order of things is personal. Moreover, since on this view God has created a number of free beings with a relative independence, there is always uncertainty in the universe. The opposite view is that, so far from this being the case, one might (theoretically) and may by-and-by practically be able to predict the whole future of the universe both in gross and detail, because everything in it is mutually determined. At bottom this view denies the reality of change and freedom and treats the world as

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1. Figgis, Civilisation at the Cross Roads, pp. 172-173.
 2. Ibid., p. 174.
 3. Figgis, The Gospel and Human Needs, p. 21

dead, i.e., given once for all, and working out a formula like a calculating machine.¹

Miracles were easy of credit in days when personal agency was detected throughout nature, and the physical world was not conceived as an orderly whole. Belief was easy then, but it was also superfluous; for the miracle was simply a fact, like any other fact of daily life, and conveyed none but a particular lesson. Nowadays the belief is not easy, but it is essential; unless we are to be deprived of all faith in our own spiritual being, and driven to view the world as a vast system, which may perhaps be a living whole, but without any place for personalities, and with our own loves and fears, our sin or sanctity mere illusions, a sort of phosphorescent by-product of the outer world. The iron law of physical sequences is always with us; the pressure of the world, environment, heredity, is patent and appalling; what is a mere theory to the student is the most constant and oppressive of facts to the plain man. It is just this very thing he wants to escape from. It is only miracle, revelation, that can assure him that behind all this network of material forces there is a living will; while God manifest in Christ displays that will as Love. That is all he wants. That gives him a refuge, a home for the soul, whose deepest emotion and noblest desires may now be satisfied. Just as a man of business or toil needs a home with all its pieties, if his higher nature is not to be starved, so man "who goeth forth to his work and to his labour until the evening" and is ever confronted by natural law, demands the assurance of spiritual freedom, of the living reality of Love and Peace.²

In an age like this, when the scientific knowledge of the natural world and our power to use it have increased so marvellously, we need some bulwark to guard us against being lost in the sea of naturalism: the danger is great lest we take the part for a whole, lest we extend into a general theory of things conceptions useful, as a partial description of the outward phenomena, conceived in abstraction, but not an account of life or ourselves. Such a bulwark is afforded by the idea of the miraculous and its content in the revelation of Jesus Christ. This alone can save us from confusing God with the creation which is His will. This alone can point to a way of escape, to a sure refuge from the iron chain of cause and effect. For this alone assures us that we are not items in a series, cogs in a great machine; but free spirits living in society, the children of one like unto us, in so far that we may love Him and speak to Him; and caring so much that God Himself died to save us. God revealed in Christ is the one truth, which gives to tired men

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1. Figgis, Civilisation at the Cross Roads, "King Richard the Third and the Reverend James Thompson," pp. 257-258.
 2. Figgis, The Gospel and Human Needs, pp. 22-23.

and women the right--the right to be a little children, with the child's freshness of delight and trust. "That is all we know on earth, and all we need to know."¹

Figgis again and again takes to task those who look upon miracles as "contra naturam."

To assume that any alleged event is "contra naturam" is to assume that we know all about Nature and that we can treat it as a closed system. The whole contention of Theism rests on the denial of this.²

Nature is often used, as by Huxley and St. Augustine, in the sense of all that happens. Here, again, miracles, if they take place, are natural; nothing "contra naturam" is even conceivable. It is in the literal--not the journalistic--sense unthinkable. Sometimes, again, Nature is used to mean the whole phenomenal world. This also would include miracles, if there be such; for "ex hypothesi" miracles are occurrences in the visible universe. Changes, however catastrophic in the inward life, need not, except in figure, be termed miraculous.³

To those who thus spoke of miracles as contrary to the order of the universe, he insisted that order is a spiritual quality and that miracles are the most excellent expression of a spiritually ordered universe, a universe not governed by immutable physical laws but by the spirit of a loving God.

The order of the universe as a whole is the only real order, the mechanical order, except on a materialistic theory, is but a formula for a part of it. Miracles reveal the personal, as distinct from the mechanical, nature of the universal order.⁴

So far from miracles being contrary to order, they are in the highest sense expressive of order; for they are admittedly irreconcilable with a mechanical conception of the universe. Ultimately a mechanical universe would not be an orderly one; for order is a spiritual quality.⁵

As part of his effort to substitute a creative evolution whose

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1. Ibid., pp. 25-26.
 2. Figgis, The Fellowship of the Mystery, "Modernism versus Modernity," p. 272.
 3. Ibid., p. 273.
 4. Ibid., p. 278.
 5. Ibid., p. 279.

impetus is God's love for a mechanical evolution of which blind fate is the moving force, Figgis went to some length to refute J. M. Thompson, whose objections to a traditional view of miracles are contained in his Miracles in the New Testament. Thompson's thought, as far as Figgis was concerned, epitomized the reign of non-personal, mechanistic, deterministic ideas borrowed from the realm of natural science, dictating the limits within which man and God must operate and ruling the miraculous out of court. Figgis pressed home the point that the true scientists of the early twentieth century had begun to recognize that psychical influences do interfere with the course of physical nature and that therefore it cannot be assumed, arguing on the basis of immutable natural laws, that miracles never happen. Figgis reveled in saying that Thompson's attack on the miraculous was based on allegiance in theological matters to an out-of-date science. Referring to McDougall's book, Body and Mind, he says:

This book deserves to be widely known. It shews what are the living tendencies among students of natural science. At least some of the acutest minds are seen to be moving away (at this very moment, when Mr. Thompson develops an attack based on the notions of the last generation) from that monism, whether materialist or spiritualist, to which all events are mere changes in the one Being and miracles or new happenings and freedom or the existence of individuals are equally out of court.¹

In his emphasis on freedom as the mark of the personality of both God and man, Figgis, although according to his own particular lights, was in the same strong tradition of the main core of "Lux Mundi" thought which "saved Anglo-Catholic theology from the Modernists' premature abandonment of the 'personal' conception of God, as revealed in Christ, in favor of a

1. Figgis, Civilisation at the Cross Roads, "King Richard the Third and the Reverend James Thompson," p. 259.

theology of divine Immanence which could be accused by its opponents without entire injustice of being mere pantheism."¹

Figgis's main effort to refute Thompson was entitled, as already indicated in the footnotes, "King Richard the Third and the Reverend James Thompson." The article's initial blast at Thompson's minimizing the miraculous in the New Testament shows Figgis the historian enjoying himself as he brings his wealth of historical background and know-how to bear yet again in the defense of the supernatural, in his "Plea for Otherworldliness." Taking Sir Clements Markham's noble effort to whitewash the blemishes traditionally associated with the character of Richard the Third, Figgis enumerates a number of the arguments used by Markham to accomplish his end, including the assertion that the writers who recorded Richard's exploits were subservient to Henry VII, who stood to gain by doing injury to the reputation of his predecessor, the labouing of the inadequacy of the evidence for the bulk of the crimes credited to Richard, the plea that Richard was no usurper but true heir to the Crown, and the insistence that Richard did not so much as make away with his nephews but that he left them alive and that they were murdered by Henry VII, or at least at his orders.

So far from being an educated Renaissance villain, Richard is shewn as a rather nice man, capable like others of crimes, but averse from them.²

Not minimizing the ingenuity of much of the case in Richard's favour, Figgis points out that Richard's new face was never accepted as representing the character of the man who lived and proceeds to explain:

1. Knox and Vidler, op. cit., p. 170.

2. Figgis, Civilisation at the Cross Roads, "King Richard the Third and the Reverend James Thompson, p. 236.

Of course all this might be the fruit of Tudor calumny; at least the contrary must be proved. But to a mind not resolved "a priori" to discard the common tradition such an explanation seems too far fetched to be probable. Thus it can be seen how, even in a case like this, any sound historical judgment must take into account not only the documents, but also the common tradition, while it must treat not merely of the facts in isolation, but the total picture, of which they are elements.¹

Thus pointing up the difficulty and the high probability of error involved in challenging the traditional opinion regarding any historical figure or event, Figgis brings this observation to bear on Thompson's book:

The age-long faith of Christendom goes for nothing. In his view the consciousness of the Church creates not even a presumption in favour of any single interpretation--indeed the presumption is rather the other way. Now it might not be accurate to say that, critically speaking, the Church tradition affords more than a presumption. But that it affords less is not so much a surrender of any conception of Divine guidance in the religious society, but it is false to the first principles of forming the most ordinary historical judgments.tradition is rarely at fault in regard to the main lineaments of any character who held the stage, and it ought always to be taken into account even by a writer who desires to set up a different view. As a matter of fact the vast development of historical investigation in the nineteenth century has not greatly altered our judgments, though it has deepened our knowledge and modified it in detail, in regard to any of the great public men. Henry VIII, Queen Elizabeth, Charles I and his sons, Marlborough, Joseph II, Richelieu, Frederic the Great, Maria Teresa do not loom so very differently to us from that they did to our grandfathers, however greatly we have deepened our acquaintance with the social and political conditions of their life.

Figgis would have felt something very like pity for the King of England if, upon crossing the border into Scotland and becoming a Presbyterian, he would in that same moment find himself a necessary devotee of the theology of John Calvin. Deriding Calvin was for Neville Figgis some-

1. *Ibid.*, p. 239.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 240-243.

thing of a hobby, a hobby which occupied his sometimes scathing pen never so fervently as when accusing the Reformer of denying man's freedom in the name of defending God's freedom.

Calvin's system as developed in his Institutio Christianae Religionis is a logical and compact doctrine, lucid, harmonious, and horrible. It starts from one tenet, and from that argues deductively without any qualification. That tenet is the sovereignty of God. The system is an intellectualist construction, entirely regardless of the facts of life. Since God can only be conceived as sovereign, and since no limits can be set to His omnipotence, for to do so is to deny His freedom, there can be no place for any real choice on the part of a created being; and the place of man in the universe is necessarily decided by divine decree. God's predestination is something more than His foreknowledge, and no consideration is given to the possibility of His limiting Himself by the creation of free beings. There never was nor will be any freedom save that of God's eternal will. In Calvin's work the notion of God as essentially Love simply does not occur.¹

The notion of God as essentially Love reoccurs constantly in Figgis's works. The Love of God is the title of a book of Figgis' sermons, sermons preached at Christ's Church, Lancaster Gate; and Saint Mary's, Graham Street. In this series he develops something like a complete apologetic from the starting point of God as Love.

"God is Love" ought to be the starting point of all our thoughts about God and the Faith; and they are so far its best apology that no God who is not love can by us be accepted. The whole of Calvin's system imposing though it be is vitiated at the outset from the Christian standpoint because it rests all on the doctrine of the sovereignty of God, who is treated as a human autocrat; Calvin has no place, except incidentally, for God's love. The presupposition of the Christian religion is quite other than that of intellectualism. It starts from this notion, that love is the real essence of things--the nature of reality--that at the spiritual centre of the universe, as the ground and support of all being, there is no philosophic absolute--but the flaming heart of

1. J. N. Figgis, Dictionary of English Church History, "Calvinism," (1912), (S. L. Ollard), pp. 80-81.

quintessential Love.¹

Having said this, Figgis proceeds to show that if God is Love, He must be a personal God, not the God of pantheism, who is indistinguishable from His creation, but a distinct personality.

For love to reach its full realization, there must always be two persons; who preserve their individuality when most united.²

Furthermore, a God of Love must be thought of as a creative God.

...the creation of a world of beings free to love, and therefore to refuse to love, is seen to be involved in the very idea of God as Love.³

Because God's revelation is born of love, it is further suggested that His self-revelation must be doubtful, that is, not subject to coercive proof.

Love cannot rest in compelled affection, indeed there is no such thing. Love's message may be refused. The response which is the soul's answer to friendship must be free and thus it cannot be intellectually coercive. Our recognition of God is akin to our recognition of earthly affection, and our knowledge of Him is like that gained in friendship. Therefore no one must be surprised if so far as proof goes, we can never get beyond presumption; the utmost we can say to one who doubts is, "Here is a great experience, try it."⁴

Sin is defined as the refusal to respond to God's love, miracles as the natural free expression of a loving, personal God bringing rule to bear on a natural world from which He is distinct; and God's sacrifice in the giving of His Son and Christ's suffering on the Cross are explained on the ground that:

Love not only gives, it must give at cost to itself--true love is

1. J. N. Figgis, The Love of God, (London, Francis Griffiths, 1916), pp. 9-10.

2. Ibid., p. 12.

3. Ibid., p. 14.

4. Ibid., p. 25.

always losing life to save it. Suffering willingly undergone is a "conditio sine qua non" for the realization in life of Love, by its very nature then one is involved in the other, and transmuted into joy therein. I now say that God Himself could only realize His nature of Love by an eternal sacrifice. He must be giving or he would not be Love. The act in time is represented by the death on the Cross. This is in truth the supreme instance of giving "all for all," For the Eternal Son must needs find Himself alone, reft of all sense, even of the Father's presence, or His Love could not have reached its full height. ... we can reach full individuality only by Loneliness--and the Son was forced to be left alone that his suffering, i.e., the real work of Love, might be real. No sacrifice that does not reach down to Loneliness of spirit is real.¹

Interesting, cogent, and imaginative as is Figgis's effort to evolve all of Christianity's major tenets from an original conception of God as Love, the reader cannot escape the impression that his frequent use of "God must" reflects a certain forcing of all thought about God into one category. Part of the explanation doubtless lies in the great care he took to avoid describing God in terms of His sovereignty, a care based on his often reiterated dislike of Calvin and the major theological emphases associated with that name. Much of Figgis's dislike for Calvinism stems from his hatred of sovereignty as a political doctrine, and his reluctance to credit that sovereignty may mean much more when it is referred to in relation to God's nature.

Not the least interesting of Figgis's developments of the basic theme of God as Love is an attempt to explain the Trinity in terms of Eternal Love, requiring eternal objects on which to shower its love.

If the meaning of God's Being is this, that He is Eternal Love--then we cannot conceive that love without an object--and this object must also be eternal..... the self-consciousness of God which

1. Ibid., pp. 29-30.

is involved in his being Love could not be realized, could not indeed be a fact, were He not able eternally to contemplate Himself in another and eternally resting in that ineffable union, a perfect friendship.....the notion of three Persons, the Eternal Son and that Holy Spirit of Love which is the Union between them, springs quite naturally and inevitably from the root principle that God is Love. If on the other hand you try to picture yourself the pure autocrat of Deism, you are left with an eternal loneliness which is not possible to reconcile with the root idea of Love. In a word, if Love is to mean anything, the unity of God must be differentiated and the differences must be of His very essence; i. e., eternal. I do not say that this would have become clear to men apart from the revelation of Jesus Christ, but in that case neither would the notion of God as Love have become dominant.¹

1. Ibid., pp. 17-19.

CHAPTER V

FIGGIS AS A THEOLOGIAN

"A Plea For Otherworldliness"

(Continued)

The student of Figgis's religious thought comes to the place where he must record something of the man's Christology, for the things which Neville Figgis urged upon his readers and listeners regarding the Person of Christ constitute the focus point of his whole "Plea for Otherworldliness."

The main issues for theology at the turn of the twentieth century ultimately centered around the Person of Jesus and the question as to whether or not He was what the Church had assumed and taught Him to be for ages. Figgis, as may be discerned from what has already been said, is uncompromising in his defense of the Founder of Christianity as the Son of God Incarnate, of whom the Scriptures give a substantially accurate account as to His person and work, and whose supernatural life continues in the life of His church insofar as the church is true to Him. A large part of Figgis's defense of Christ as not merely man but God has been implicit and explicit in what has already been said about Figgis's defense of the miraculous element in Christianity, his emphasis on the congruity of the Gospel with human needs, his insistence on the importance of experience and of reasoning from the whole of that experience in making any estimate regarding the truth or falsehood of any one of its aspects, especially its

historical aspect. What follows is by way of adding to and expanding what has already been said.

There had been a strong tendency in the Oxford Movement, as exemplified in the writings of Liddon, to exaggerate the divinity of Christ to an almost complete neglect of His real humanity. Christ's humanity under the influence of this bias was understood to possess perfect knowledge of all reality, past, present and future. With the advance of science and the important accomplishments in the field of the historical criticism of the Old and New Testaments, it became patently clear that Christ, during His earthly ministry, was limited to the knowledge of his contemporaries as regards matters of historical and scientific fact. The very conservative Anglo-Catholics were rigorously opposed to accepting these findings, especially in that they had such ominous implications for the view of Christ's Incarnation which they championed. In reaction against this kind of conservatism, many religious thinkers, realizing that the defenders of religion cannot close their eyes to scientific and historical discoveries, proceeded to identify themselves with that Liberalism which rejected all ecclesiastical dogma as a necessary preliminary to the return to the historical Jesus.

It was the writers of Lux Mundi, chief among them being Gore, who, in coming to the fore with a Kenotic Christology (its leading exponent having been Bishop Martensen of Denmark), presented a view of Christ which was essentially orthodox and loyal to the Person whose ministry is recorded in the New Testament without being orthodox in the sense of holding to the doctrinaire Docetism which typified so much of traditional Anglo-Catholicism.

In so doing, they preserved a meaningful third alternative for those who felt they had to choose between a staid Orthodoxy and a devastating Liberalism. John Neville Figgis was a young Anglo-Catholic who worked his way back from a rather shallow Liberalism to find a theological home in this third alternative. Although there is not much reference in Figgis's works to a Kenotic Christology as such, through and through there is that insistence on what constituted a major part of kenotic thinking--that Christ in His Incarnation voluntarily laid aside the exercise of those attributes of deity that would have hindered a real human experience.

...we need no Christ to assure of God's greatness. That God is little, that is the truth which Jesus taught man, and we find at once so tender and so perplexing. It is of the nature of love to be infinitely minute, as well as soaring in its imagination, and this nature is shown us by Christ. All His most appealing qualities reveal this aspect; the heart of Christendom has gone out to the story of Bethlehem and the manger, of the shepherds, and the wise man; to the blessing of the children, the words about the sparrows and the lilies. This is what gives to Christian devotion its distinctive, poignant note, so different in its simple gaiety from the honour paid to the First Cause, or the Absolute, or the Necessary Being, the "Summum Bonum." The mother and the child, the helpless sufferer on the cross, the "gentle Jesus" of the hymn--these are images that come close to the toiling and wayworn, the disinherited and the ineffectual; sometimes perhaps to the neglect of austere truths. It is not God in His power and majesty, the pride of Deity, which was revealed in Jesus, but in deed and truth God in His humiliation, scorned, spat upon, dying, that has been the force which changed the world more than all the armies of all the emperors.

...Like all the real things of life this truth is hard to fathom; yet it is the case that the revelation of the manger and the Cross has given to men that which elsewhere they seek in vain. It may be easier for the Church to believe in God as the moral governor of the universe, or the immanent Spirit, or the unchanging idea--but to the despairing conscience, to the worldling satiate with pleasure and seeking rest, all this is words and emptiness. But tell him of the tender love which gave its only begotten Son, speak to him of the child of Nazareth, and at once, if he can trust you, his heart

leaps up. The vision of God's greatness is ever with us to appal and oppress, and we withdraw trembling from His glory. Show us the vision of His littleness and weakness, love self-emptying and suffering, and we can cry in the old hymn--"Jesu, Lover of my soul, Let me to Thy bosom fly."¹

The supreme and most difficult act of Divine omnipotence is His-Self-limitation; and it is conditioned only by humility in God, which is the true expression of His nature as Love;²

In the context of his showing that sacrifice is a necessary expression of love and that "God Himself could only realize His nature of Love by an eternal sacrifice," it becomes even more clear that Figgis believed in a Christ who "emptied Himself" of all those divine prerogatives that would have made His life the exercise of power from beyond rather than an exercise of sympathy from within the realm of difficult human experience. Of Christ's words from the Cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Figgis writes:

For the Eternal Son must needs find himself alone, reft of all sense even of the Father's presence, or His love could not have reached its full height. We can reach full individuality only by loneliness-and the Son was forced to be left alone that His suffering, i.e., the real work of love, might be real. No sacrifice that does not reach down to loneliness of spirit is real.³

The One Christ, written by Frank Weston and published in 1907, is recognized as being in the main stream of the "Lux Mundi" tradition while yet representing "an independent attempt to meet the difficulties of the time."⁴ Much the same can be said of Figgis's, The Gospel and Human Needs, delivered in 1908, and published in 1910. While in the "Lux Mundi" tradi-

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1. Figgis, The Gospel and Human Needs, pp. 86-88.
 2. Figgis, The Fellowship of the Mystery, p. 35.
 3. Figgis, The Love of God, p. 30.
 4. Knox and Vidler, op. cit., p. 203.

tion, yet in light of Figgis's historical training and know-how, his Evangelical background, the influence of Mandell Creighton, and the fact of his own unusual personality as having passed through various stages of religious and Christian experience, it too represents an independent effort to develop the distinctive challenge of faith. The work may be said, in some measure at least, to share the plaudits with Weston's book for bringing to an end for serious Anglo-Catholic theology the old view of Christ with its implications either of dual personality or Docetic humanity.

Although Docetism was a problem, the greater issue at the time Figgis's voice was being heard centered around the "Jesus of History" and the "Christ of Dogma," controversy and the assertion on the part of not a few that the latter could be retained without retaining the former. Those who accepted without question the radical criticism of the New Testament, such as Modernists like Corrance and Loisy, believed that Christianity is basically an adherence to certain general principles of conduct and a belief in a spiritual universe and that it is not necessary to make such belief contingent on the historicity of certain actual occurrences. It made little difference to their thought whether the main events of Christ's life were historically authentic or not. Men like Hegel and Ritschl had contributed significantly to this theological craze for disentangling the kernel idea in Christianity from the external husk of historical facts and institutions. Figgis was fully cognizant of this trend in religious thought or lack of thought. He opens his chapter in The Gospel and Human Needs on "The Historic Christ" with these words:

In a moment of irony Huxley once prophesied that a time would come when apologists would be telling Christians to hold fast to their faith, quite apart from the irrelevant question whether or no there were any facts to confirm it! That prophecy has come true.¹

In reply to and in contrast with the kind of thinking that dismissed the stories of the birth and resurrection of Jesus as symbolic and which yet claimed that in all its essentials Christianity kept its former identity, Figgis writes:

Christian faith does not rest upon history by itself, for its most compelling arguments are the lives of the saints and our own experience. But it is so bound up with the events of at least one period of actual history that if you destroy men's belief in the substantial accuracy of the one, you will not long retain even the name of the other.

Apart from the portrait of Jesus, it is idle to talk of the Christian religion; and whatever details in that portrait may be irrelevant, the main impression of a being at once natural and supernatural, unique in his origin, in his action, and in his rising from the tomb is inseparable from the portrait. And most men are like children asking of a story-teller "Is it true?" Convince them in regard to the story of Jesus that it is not true, but only a symbol of the religious aspirations of ages, and men will repudiate either in scorn or sorrow the claims of the Church to be the home of the soul, and seek for themselves some other refuge. The New Temple may be grander or nearer, more beautiful or uglier than the Christian Church, but it will not be the Christian Church; it will be something else.²

Christology was a popular subject in the early 1900's in Great Britain. The "Jesus or Christ" controversy attests to the fact. A volume by that name was published as a supplement to "The Hibbert Journal" for 1909, the title coming from the lead article, "Jesus or Christ? A Plea for Consistency," by Rev. R. Roberts. The remainder of the volume consists of various replies to Roberts's insistence that it was incon-

1. Figgis, The Gospel and Human Needs, p. 56.

2. Ibid., p. 59.

ceivable that the Man from Nazareth could have been limited as He was, Kenotic Christology notwithstanding, and still have been God.

Can we conceive of Jesus believing in and understanding the Copernican system or following the reasonings of Newton? Is it possible to think of Him following the dialectic of Aristotle or entering into the enjoyment of the art of Pheidias? Political science is a necessity of civilization, but what proof is there in the evidence before us that Jesus had any conception of society as the product of human reasoning dealing with the facts of associated experience? If Jesus was man only, these questions are irrelevant. But if he was God, they raise, for me, an insoluble difficulty.¹

E.S.

For Figgis, as for Talbot and Holland, the latter two having written replies to Roberts in the "kenotic" tradition of the "Lux Mundi" school, the issues raised presented no "insoluble difficulty," rather they constituted the genius, or as Figgis loved to say, "the charm," of the Christian faith and the Person of Jesus Christ.

The charm of Christianity lies in its excessive concreteness; not merely is God seen embodied in man, but He comes to us, not as one of the more abstract and speculative classes aloof from the crowd, but Emmanuel, God with us. It is to the crib and the baby that men look, to the boy in the temple, to the strange preacher of goodness, the friend of Lazarus, to the sufferer of Gethsemane, the confronter of Pilate and Herod, and, above all, to the "strange Man on the Cross." This it is which pulls the heart out of humanity, and gives to Jesus an undying attraction for men who sin and women who suffer and boys and girls who love and quarrel. It is vain to hurl against us the obvious fact, as though it were a new discovery, that Jesus was not a philosopher or an author or an art critic. Who ever said He was? The whole point of His life lies in the fact that He was not.²

Figgis's Christology was concerned above all with that "strange Man on the Cross," with Christ as Redeemer:

1. R. Roberts, "Jesus or Christ?" An Appeal for Consistency." The Hibbert Journal, VII, (1908-1909), pg. 361.

2. Figgis, The Fellowship of the Mystery, pp. 31-32.

The gift of God is not merely in Jesus, as the brightness of His Being, nor even in our communion with the Risen Life. It lies in the great Act upon the Cross, where by His one sacrifice once offered He "made a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world." Mankind, as a whole needs not so much revelation as redemption. It is not a theoretical problem, but a practical trouble, that drives men to Christ.¹

He felt that nineteenth century English theology in general and the Tractarian Movement in particular had stressed the doctrine of the Incarnation to the neglect of the doctrine of the Atonement.

This, then, is the ground of hope for the Christian religion; the world not only needs but feels the need of redemption; it does not always use the word. But if we are to realise this hope, we must fulfil certain conditions. First of all, this redemptive character of the Christian Faith must not be slurred over; the theology of grace must be emphasised, the sense that it is not of him that willeth, or him that runneth, but God from Whom comes all help and power--the picture of the Gospel as light to a world in darkness, or, more accurately, a spar to a man drowning in a rough sea, and not merely the thought of religion as the guarantee of man's own higher thought, or the sanction of honourable living, or of social piety. It is that, but it is much more than that. What the world needs is help; it feels that it cannot help itself alone, and if it can only believe it is ready to recognise that power from beyond which shall tell us that "our warfare is accomplished, our sin is pardoned."

People are afraid sometimes to talk about the forgiveness of sins, but it is what we all want now. The Tractarian Movement went too far in its reaction from the crude language and excited appeals "to be saved" of the Evangelicals. In the last age the Atonement was not denied; it was taken for granted. Conversion, definite conversion, very often was denied. Men thought of the Incarnation as the central truth, and that if they concentrated upon that all the rest would follow.

Unfortunately, what has followed this thrusting aside of the Atonement has been an increasing hesitation about the worship of Jesus as Lord. Make people think of Jesus as Saviour, and they will soon worship Him as Lord. Make Him only the Lord of all good life, and

1. Ibid., p. 37.

they will begin to think of Him merely as the embodiment of the moral ideal; and gradually, almost without knowing it, to lose sight of His transcendent nature. It is Jesus as our Saviour Who always wins men, and always will do, except the virtuous few.....¹

Here the continuing impact of Figgis's Evangelical background, against which he once revolted but which he came to cherish as sacred to his past and relevant to much of his mature faith, can be seen coming to the fore. Also one sees here the strong influence of Mandell Creighton:

The wisest Churchman of the last age, Mandell Creighton, was apt to say that men had erred in giving this truth (the truth of the Atonement) the second place and laying all the emphasis on the Incarnation. Whether this tendency was wrong in its own day, we need not ask; probably it was needed. But its work is done. What may be called the Alexandrine age of English theology has passed or is passing. And now we need above all things to insist on "the Cruciality of the Cross." Christianity is a religion of deliverance, of escape, or it is nothing;²

Figgis referred to P. T. Forsyth almost invariably when making this emphasis on the Atonement and found himself in essential agreement here as in many other matters with the brilliant Nonconformist theologian, the value of whose works is being increasingly appreciated and who said: "Redemption is the 'elan vital' of Christianity."

One of the reasons Figgis felt that "a stronger and more vital hold on the Cross will be the note of effective religion in the age now beginning" (written in 1910) was not only because he believed the Cross to be at the heart of the Gospel for all time but also because he saw that in his time men were finally awakening to a sense of their own and their world's depravity, to the "awryness" of things, as Figgis put it so often. He rec-

1. Figgis, Hopes for English Religion, pp. 21-23.
2. Figgis, Antichrist, p. 113.

ognized the First World War as bringing to a dramatic end for thinking people all comfortable theories about the "best of all possible worlds," "inevitable progress," and the easy optimism about man's nature which does not see the necessity of looking upon man as essentially sinful, illusions which Figgis himself had long since abandoned.

This war has put an end to this optimism. (The shallow sentiment of a good-natured universe which since the time of Leibnitz has ruled a large amount of educated and benevolent opinion.) Certain notions once popular have been destroyed by it. The intellectual baggage for life's cabin passage, which a little while ago did duty, has been torpedoed. First and foremost, men have learned the reality of evil. Men used to say that evil was ignorance, or that it was imperfection, or arrested development, or the survival of animal instinct, or even that it was mere illusion, the inevitable error of a limited and partial view, but that from the point of view of God there was no such thing as evil. Now the world has seen it in "all the naked horror of the truth." Evil is the chosen idol of a will self-absorbed and worshipping its own fancies. Other errors this age may make and will make. All kinds of different schemes for salvation it may embrace. One thing it will not do: it will not deny that salvation in some form is a need of the world;¹

Figgis took the proponents of the New Theology to task at every point of his "Flea for Otherworldliness," nor did they escape his scorn for failing to recognize and to speak to man's need for redemption.

Nearly all those who propound some one of the newer forms of Christianity, in spite of all other divergences agree in this-- they belittle the Christian doctrine of sin.²

In this category Figgis singled out such writers as Algernon Sidney Crapsey, Sir Oliver Lodge, R. J. Campbell, Lowes Dickinson, and Bishop Butler; and of Tyrrell's Christianity at the Cross Roads, he said:

...in relegating to a subordinate place, the problem of sin and

1. Figgis, Hopes for English Religion, pp. 16-17.

2. Figgis, The Gospel and Human Needs, p. 94.

redemption, it takes away from orthodoxy its main support. If I were not a sinner, many other systems would suit me well enough; there are attractions about pantheism; it is without certain difficulties never quite surmountable in the historic faith, which very well may lead to good and noble men refusing to walk therein, and copying men like Marcus Aurelius, or teachers like Socrates. It is for sinners that Christ made his awful sacrifice, and no apologetic which omits conversion is likely even to get near the fringe of the subject.¹

To dramatize and document the inability of the thought of such men to speak to man's greatest need, his need for redemption, Figgis speaks from the depth of his own experience, his own sense of sin.

It is that very "worrying" about sin which I cannot escape that obstructs all my desires to be up and doing and blights even my highest and purest thoughts. Doubtless I might be happier, could I feel myself a man of the new dogmatic, not "essentially a sinner"! But I cannot. I cannot help it; I have this burden, like Christian in the story, and I cannot roll it off except at the foot of the Cross. Miserable and well-nigh hopeless in face of the future, I have to live. Taught by oft-recurring failures to distrust my best resolves, and finding sincerest love and all the hardest sacrifices vain, stained with the past, frightened in face of the tempter, aware how easy it is to yield and what little rest he gives, tortured with lustful passions, a prey to pride and malice, contemptible even more than odious in my weakness, divided in my inmost being, torn every hour between God and the devil, to whom shall I go? What must I do to be saved? Alas! I know that I can do nothing. I have no "quid pro quo" to offer God, and cannot win my pardon by any virtue or gift. I am naked, beaten, prostrate..... What is true of myself may probably be true of many others..... To all so feeling, the facile optimism of the new theology is sheer unreality.

Religion without deliverance, though it may appeal to a few favoured and noble spirits, is no hope, no treasure to me.

Preach to the stricken sinner every truth of which we have hitherto been speaking, and apart from redemption you will but deepen his gloom. Tell him that God has revealed the other world as by a flash,

1. J. N. Figgis, "Christianity at the Cross Roads, A Review," The Quarterly Chronicle of the Community of the Resurrection, (Christmas 1909), p. 11.

that He is a Spirit, not tied down to the sensible universe, that death does not close all. He will answer, "So much the worse for me unless you can rid me of the barrier which divides me from God and leaves me lonely."¹

An evolutionary philosophy, masquerading as a spiritual religion, gives some all they feel the need of, while on the intellectualist assumptions the objections to the Christian faith must always appear very nearly insuperable. At least they make it easier to "interpret" than to accept the creeds. It is only the individual's passionate insistence that he must be redeemed, that carries him beyond the ordinary assumptions of idealism, to a belief in a personal Saviour, in the Church, the Cross, and the Sacraments.²

For all of his stress on Christ's redemptive act, in no place does Figgis define his or subscribe to any one theory of the Atonement.

1. Figgis, The Gospel and Human Needs, pp. 102-105.

2. Ibid., pp. 162-163.

Deep as was Figgis's own sense of sin and as important as he saw the Christian doctrine of sin to be to the whole Christian apologetic, yet he did not subscribe to anything like a doctrine of total depravity. He understood sin only as a disease of the will. "It is not human nature, not classes of men, nor the fact of existence that is wrong, but the disease of the will. Human nature is in itself of so high a worth that God could take that nature upon Him, and bring about redemption through the death on the Cross, and give us life from His own risen life." Figgis, Hopes for English Religion, pp. 14-15. That he did not believe in total depravity is abundantly evident through his numerous references in his writings to his faith in the "anima naturaliter humana." "When we have realised what I have been saying today, that the Christian ideal of cross-bearing is at the bottom of all human life that is worthy, we shall be less apt to be dismayed by the many violences that we see around us. For in the long run the 'anima naturaliter humana' must assert itself; and along with the return of the human ideal will eventually come the conviction of many, that the human points on to the Christian." Figgis, The Fellowship of the Mystery, p. 146. This expression gives that much more authority to Kelle Talbot's statement that Figgis had too much faith in instinct to permit any close parallel to be drawn between him and Barth.

Furthermore, Figgis did not concern himself as to whether or not the sinful tendency of man's will is due to Adam's fall. He would have gone along with Gore's statement that "there must have been a moment when an innocent man sinned consciously, choosing evil when he had before him a clear knowledge of what his choice involved."

Nor again are we....contending for any one theory of the Atonement, but for the fact and reality of forgiveness.

The forms in which past ages have expressed their sense of the gift are neither satisfactory nor authoritative. Yet even the most grotesque testify to the extreme value of the truth such explanations were designed to guarantee, and to the real sense in which forgiveness is so hard that it needs the miracle of a dying God to accomplish. It were better to accept the crudest and most forensic doctrine of substitution rather than surrender the truth it is intended to set forth.¹

I am persuaded that we who are guardians of the gift are worse than foolish if we preach the Christian faith mainly as the Incarnation or the Resurrection, and put into the second place the thought of Jesus Christ and Him Crucified. The doctrine of the Atonement is not fully clear to us; but is there any doctrine which is? Much thinking needs to be done thereon, and perhaps this age may contribute something. But it is this fact of forgiveness which turns the creed into the Gospel and converts the sinner.²

E. G. Selwyn, writing in Theology for January 1937, said:

...the main conclusions of the documentary analysis of the Scriptures has not been seriously altered since the nineteenth century closed; and German theology has turned itself increasingly in our generation to the study of the Gospel itself as the Word of God, with its tidings of Redemption through the Cross of Christ. In England, likewise, the note of pessimism and the need of Redemption.....has increasingly led Christian thought to the Cross. The events of the present century have seemed each year to drive the message home. In the crucible of these events, there is being formed a Liberal Catholicism which has the Cross of Christ at its center.³

John Neville Figgis played no small part before his death in 1919 in bringing English thought back to the Cross and contributed significantly to the formation of a Liberal Catholicism with the Cross of Christ at its center.

Figgis's "Plea for Otherworldliness" was never more emphatic

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1. Figgis, The Gospel and Human Needs, pp. 110-111.
 2. Figgis, The Fellowship of the Mystery, pp. 39-40.
 3. E. G. Selwyn, "Christ in Nineteenth Century Thought," Theology, (January 1937), pp. 18-19.

than when asserting the absolute necessity of thinking in "otherworldly" terms if anything like a Christian ethic is to be preserved. His recognition of moral anarchy as typifying the ethics of the early twentieth Century has already been taken into account.¹ There was no question in Figgis's mind that the assumption common in the previous century that the Christian ethic could be preserved although severed from its reliance on Christian dogma had no basis in fact.

In truth, what has emerged more than anything else in the controversies of the last fifteen years is the fact of the ethical distinctness of Christianity. It was denied during what we may call the Huxleian epoch. Any Christian who ventured to assert that the ethics of Christians were dependent on their faith and could not maintain themselves apart from it, was regarded as narrow-minded.²

Much of our talk is futile, though the implied assumption that, whatever the superstructure of dogmatic or ecclesiastical architecture, the substructure of ethical ideals is always the same. It is not. So far as international politics are concerned, this fact has been known to students ever since Machiavelli told the truth about Italy. So far as our personal life goes, even the most optimistic should be persuaded by a glance through the magazines, plays, and novels for any period of six months in the last ten years.³

Just how intimately connected he believed an essentially orthodox belief in the Person of Christ to be with the survival of an essentially Christian ethic can be seen from these words:

This boneless Christ of the German liberals, this "transient, embarrassed phantom" living in vain and dying in disillusion, is not only incapable of producing the mighty fact of the Christian Church, or the mightier one of the converted soul, but he cannot even maintain that lofty moral ideal which is by

1. *Supra.*, p. 140.

2. Figgis, *The Fellowship of the Mystery*, p. 111.

3. Figgis, *Hopes for English Religion*, p. 104.

some supposed to be the sole residuum of Christianity.¹

Closely allied with Figgis's assertion that loyalty to dogma and the ecclesiastical structure which embodies that dogma are absolutely essential to the preserving of high ethical ideals is the assertion that the necessary social reforms require an "otherworldly" orientation and motivation as well.

It is a change that is needed, a revolution of the spirit; and if this once be realized, the strength of the claims of the Christian Church is in a fair way to be felt. Of the social reformer we may ask, "Where are you likely to get the driving force to bring about those tremendous changes unless you have a religious faith, or something very like it? Change the economic system of society without somehow changing the passion and the pride of man and you will but change the ways in which the strong will exploit the weak. Without some change of heart, some fresh orientation of the spirit, how are your great social changes to be effected or effectual?"²

The choice lies between schemes limited to this world, or schemes which give redemption at the cost of personal existence, and the Christian scheme, which "preaches peace to them that are off and to them that are nigh," because it worships One who is not only the Light, but is also the Life of men, and not only their Life, but also their Saviour.³

The Christian, like the non-Christian philanthropist, is appalled at the vast spectacle of ugliness and tyranny which is the modern notion of civilisation. But such changes he demands, he demands because man is primarily an other-worldly being, and existing arrangements tend to turn him from his true end, ...⁴

The main thesis of this paper is that "The Contribution of John Neville Figgis (1866-1919) to the Religious Thought of His Period" is his "Plea for Otherworldliness," which is a way of saying that his chief emphasis was eschatological in nature. His eschatological emphasis was

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1. Figgis, Antichrist, p. 29.
 2. Figgis, Civilisation at the Cross Roads, pp. 117-118.
 3. Ibid., p. 119.
 4. Figgis, The Gospel and Human Needs, p. 127.

never more strong than when proclaiming the inextricable relation of Christian social ethics and Christianity's otherworldly quality.

...the whole meaning of the Christian religion is that it looks beyond this life for its fruition, and that it does not believe in any perfection this side the grave; thus it can never (while remaining Christianity) realise a condition of equilibrium. All the schemes for the amelioration of human life which are limited to this world, must be theoretically capable of entire realisation, and so far may be exhausted. There comes a time--in thought at least--when the social reformer must sit down and weep with Alexander, for there are no new slums to conquer.¹

In this regard there is seen the capital importance of keeping in sight the otherworldly aim in Christian living. If for an hour we allow ourselves to become immersed in any scheme of Christian progress that is confined purely to this world, we shall find, not merely that we have lost our true character and distinction, but also that the spring and vitality of all our work is gone. Only as we live within the circle of the Ascended Glory shall we be really able for work here.²

...as always, it has been the mystic, the man with his eyes on the other world, whose hands are most forward to do good in this.³

The authors of Lux Mundi were not only pioneers in theology, they were also responsible in large degree for the introduction into the Catholic movement of the social teachings of Westcott and Maurice. Webb said of them and their immediate followers:

The Younger High Church School stands in the succession of the Christian Socialists of Maurice and Kingsley and Westcott, as well as that of the Tractarians.⁴

Figgis stood in the strong stream of this Younger High Church School emphasis on social reform, but according to his own political and social insights

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1. Figgis, The Fellowship of the Mystery, p. 92.
 2. Ibid., pp. 93-94.
 3. Ibid., "John Henry Newman," p. 253.
 4. C. C. J. Webb, A Century of Anglican Theology, (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1923), p. 19.

as spelled out in Chapters II and III of this paper, insights which culminated in a strong preference for some form of Guild Socialism as offering the best hope among many schemes for improving the lot of common man as victimized by a mechanical, money-infatuated, impersonal, social and economic system.¹

It further documents what has already been said of Figgis' sense of a world headed towards destruction to read his estimate of the modern way of life:

What is revolting is the conditions which take from a large mass of men the means of a worthy personal life, which breed child-criminals, pay women "the wages of prostitution," and even among those better off produce an appalling insecurity. For thousands of people live always on the edge of a precipice, and many more are breaking down from the overstrain of an age which lives in a fever. For is it not true that at present services are performed by "private individuals under competitive conditions, struggling for life and death on the inclined plane that leads to ruin, fighting always for more, lest they should be obliged to take less, too many of them everywhere competing for one job, and the conditions of success not only or even mainly merit and capacity, still less honesty and rectitude, which may be positive disqualifications, but that peculiar and intrinsically contemptible art we call 'push?'"²

It is not iron or engines, it is the unchecked operation of greed that makes life so hideous; and until the soul of man is weary of his millions, we need hardly look for much improvement.³

And although he did not believe it was the church's role to offer a scheme of reforms, but rather to offer men a new soul, a new life, deliverance

1. Figgis was by the force of his own political philosophy opposed to a centralized, socialistic welfare state. He was in favour of strong groups within the state as the only effective means of securing good conditions on a large scale. He interpreted the Trades Unionism Movement as a great spontaneous effort to realize much of the ideal of Guild Socialism.

2. Figgis, Civilisation at the Cross Roads, p. 87.

3. Ibid., p. 104.

through faith, Figgis did believe strongly and proclaimed uncompromisingly that the church shared the burden of guilt for the state in which society found itself at the turn of the century. He found the church especially guilty of taking the part of the rich and neglecting the poor.

Now what have we done, we good Christian people of England, whether we are Anglican, Roman, or Nonconformist? Are we satisfied? Can anybody be satisfied who looks about him, in view of the appalling facts of child labour, prostitution, disease, avoidable accident, ruined lives, which are the basis of all the fortunes of the rich and the comfort of us all? Here and there some one has raised a protest, only to be treated as a crank. I do not mean that we are to have a political or economic programme because we are Christians. I only say, Why, if we are going to make errors, should these errors always be errors on the side of the rich, so that people think of the Church as "the Conservative party at prayer?" If we must make mistakes, let us do so on the side of the disinherited. Yet most of us, even those who think of these things, hardly dare to lift up our voices. Why? We do not want to lose support. Mr. Bernard Shaw has said that all religious organizations are sold to the rich. That may be unfair. Yet there is more grief in the circles of the Church over one rich man that departeth than over ninety and nine poor persons who never come near to be baptized.

True, we are not concerned with economic details. But we are with the Gospel of fellowship. No wonder they think us insincere. Here you are, they say, preaching that the Church is a society, that we are members one of another, that there is neither Jew nor Greek, but Christ is all and in all. Yet you lift no finger against the evils which make fellowship impossible; you are mainly concerned to denounce those who do lift their finger. "Dividends in danger" is the one cry that unites people.¹

Unless we can be the Church of the poor, we had far better cease to be a Church at all. More and more does it appear that no correctness of dogma, no beauty of Catholic ritual, no sentiment of devotion, no piety esoteric and aloof can secure the Church from collapse, unless she gain a "change of heart" in regard to the relations of wealth and poverty. Not indeed that it is necessary, or even desirable, that the Church as a Church should have a policy; for in the modern State, which is nothing if not heterogeneous

1. Figgis, Some Defects in English Religion, pp. 36-37.

in religion, no policy can be recommended merely on Christian grounds; and the Church "qua" Church knows of no other. But the Church as a corporate society ought to do the deepest penance for her share in producing the existing relations between the fortunate classes and the disinherited; and also for the widespread opinion, which must have some foundation, that she represents the cause rather of the rich than of the poor.¹

Figgis's sense of the social injustices of his time had not a little to do, according to his own confession, with his decision to leave his comfortable living at Marnhull for the poverty of monkdom in Mirfield.

Holding what was called a rich living (as things go), I resigned it and joined a community of men living in voluntary poverty; not the main, but one motive, was the feeling that at least one would be no more exploiting other classes, and that one would be rid of responsibility for an order, which such an act flouts. But I have not found it so. Primarily I am not interested in these topics and prefer to be free of them to think of other things. But the very means of such simplified living as is provided by this regime, and every piece of bread I eat and every train I travel by, and to some extent the possibility of such an "order" at all, so far as it depends on anything but alms, all issue out of the system which is so repellent. The gains of the act are purely personal, and one's relation to the economic system as a whole alters but slightly, nor does the class-support grow less for such a surrender, in many ways it grows greater, save that one is always a recipient, no longer a donor. Certainly no man is justified in thinking he is freed from all further responsibility and may dismiss from his mind the economic muddle of the world. He cannot be freed. So long as he lives, it is in him; and writhe as we may, we must bear the Nessus-shirt of modern industrialism and still feel that, as we have all our lives been sheltered through the blood and tears of others and ridden on the crest of the wave, so we do still; and ours will be the guilt if the chains of injustice are made heavier.²

Sheer world-flight is not possible. The extremest ascetic—S. Simon on his pillar—must be fed.³

It can be seen, therefore, that Figgis' social conscience was the more

1. Figgis, The Fellowship of the Mystery, pp. 100-101.

2. Figgis, Civilisation at the Cross Roads, pp. 84-86.

3. Figgis, The Political Aspects of S. Augustine's 'City of God' pp. 116-117.

awakened by his entering the Community of the Resurrection. The result was that he continued to exercise his mind and his pen in expressing his concern that civilization was in need of redemption and his conviction that an otherworldly faith alone had the power to redeem.

It is not surprising that Figgis' sensitivity to social problems was increased after going to Mirfield, for many, although not all, of the men in the Community shared the social passion of the Younger High Church School. In his brief history of the Community of the Resurrection, E. K. Talbot writes:

...the social ferment of the times challenged many in the Community to a fresh apprehension of the faith in its bearings upon the life of human society. Heads began to wag at teaching which appeared to be dangerously revolutionary. Not without qualms within the Community itself, liberty was allowed to individuals to proclaim their social convictions, to appear on Labour platforms, even to declare themselves Socialists at a time when that title was one of approbrium in the minds of many church people. The presence of Mr. Keir Hardie at conferences in the Quarry between clergy and Labour leaders was greeted as a portent of sinister import to some, to others of hope. It was difficult for people to understand how a Community of Religious could refuse to dragoon its members into uniformity or could accord to them such liberty of utterances. Tension? Certainly: but tension is the condition of any unity worth having.¹

For all the time and energy Figgis gave to social problems, there can be no question but that he considered efforts at social betterment of secondary importance. His ultimate allegiance was to that otherworld which he insisted upon so often as the only abiding motive for improving man's condition.

The duty, however arduous, of making earth a fairer place to dwell

1. Keble Talbot, "The Community 1892-1942," The Quarterly Chronicle of the Community of the Resurrection, (St. John the Baptist 1942), p. 12.

in, yields in stringency to that of helping men to see what is harder still, that they have not long to dwell here, that how they live is more important than what they live on.¹

Figgis was very much interested in the Seventeenth Century divine, Jacques Bossuet. He lectured on Bossuet at Oxford during the Summer term of 1914. In the preface to the second edition of From Gerson to Grotius, he speaks of "the work on Bossuet which I hope some day to bring out."² The fact is that Figgis did begin to write such a book, some six chapters of which may be read in the copy made by C. S. Phillips of the partial manuscript found among Figgis's papers following his death.³

The first two chapters of this incomplete work on Bossuet are dedicated to establishing Bossuet as an excellent diocesan in his relation with the laity, the clergy, and the religious houses. The second chapter deals at great length with the details of Bossuet's fight to bring the Abbey at Jouarre into submission. The whole incident, Figgis reported, "....shows Bossuet at his best; inflexible in maintaining discipline but carrying gentleness in method to the extreme."⁴ The third chapter pic-

1. Figgis, The Gospel and Human Needs, p. 127.

2. Figgis, From Gerson to Grotius, p. vii.

3. The copy is in the library of the Community of the Resurrection. There seems to be considerable mystery as to just how near Figgis ever came to completing his work on Bossuet. It was generally accepted that a good portion of the incomplete study went down with the "Andania." The question is raised as to whether the papers Phillips worked on represent an effort to rewrite what had been lost at sea or whether they in fact represent the complete extent of Figgis's accomplishments in his study of Louis XIV's confessor. There are a number of good reasons, including the question of Figgis's mental balance in his later years, for suggesting that the evidence is weighted on the side of the latter possibility. It is also known that Figgis had hoped to go to France after World War I to further pursue the Bossuet study.

4. J. N. Figgis, "Jacques Bossuet," handwritten transcript by C. S. Phillips.

tures Bossuet as an austere moralist, as something of a Puritan; the fourth documents certain of Bossuet's leanings towards Jansenism; and the last deals with a phase of Bossuet's life least commendable in Figgis's eyes, his use of his position to ruin the career of Richard Simon, whom Figgis points out as the father of modern criticism.

Interesting as are the other chapters, the fifth chapter, the one entitled, "Bossuet and the Jesuits--the Probablist Controversy," is the most complete, the most worthy of notice, the only one ever published (in The Quarterly Chronicle of the Community of the Resurrection), and the one most appropriately dealt with while considering Figgis's general position on ethics. Figgis defines the issue:

The whole problem of Probablism is the problem of dealing with those cases of conscience in which the dictates of the moral law are doubtful. It has nothing to do with those in which they are certain. In a case in which it is doubtful whether the moral law forbids or allows a certain act, what is to be done? That is the problem which Probablism seeks to answer.¹

Having defined the issue, he proceeds to show that Bossuet opposed probabilism, that the Jesuits favoured it, and that he, Figgis, generally shared the Jesuit position.

The casuists have an ill name: but they are trying to discuss problems which are bound to arise in any society that is at all complex: and Probabilists were laying down one portion of the function. Protestants have never ceased to jibe at casuistry and probabilism. But they have saved themselves all trouble by abandoning the confessional.²

Figgis expressed his bias in favour of casuistry in another place as well:

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1. Ibid.
 2. Ibid.

Law, again, can (no) more than give a rough formula for ordinary cases. There must be difficult cases on the border-line. Hence arose casuistry, the science of dealing with cases on the edge. When it is difficult to know which class is right, casuistry is necessary. It becomes dangerous only if you try to make a general rule out of exceptional cases. Without it you get an unfair rigidity. Some defenders of tradition forget this. Love to God and our neighbour are the two eternal principles of God's law. All application of rules must be judged by them. You can have no system of law which has not a loophole for dispensations. This is known to the Romans, but it is not always realized among ourselves. Some people are all for applying the whole canonical system apart from those relaxations which alone rendered it tolerable in practice. The best practical rule is to lean to the lenient view when we are judging other people and to the severe one when we are planning for ourselves.¹

Figgis's own views come even more to the fore in the chapter on probabilism as he defines the legitimacy of choosing the laxer of two alternatives in a case where the external authorities are equal and even in some cases where the individual's conscience leans in the direction of the more severe alternative.

If the severer view is always to be followed in all doubtful cases, the whole direction of morality will pass to the least human and understanding of men.....²

In these matters moral certainty is often not possible. Yet if one always ties the agent to the severer view, we shall obtain unendurable results.³

Figgis contended that if an issue is doubtful and the person's conscience is biased in the direction of severity, the person's temperament should determine whether that bias should be determining or not.

If he is told that he must treat that bias as though it were a certainty, what will happen? It will depend upon the tempera-

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1. Figgis, Some Defects in English Religion, p. 23.
 2. Figgis, "Jacques Bossuet,"
 3. Ibid.

ament. Persons of one temperament will grow more and more restive: and will continue to obey a rule which they only half approve and will ultimately become morbidly scrupulous or throw off the whole of their faith because it is seen to be involved in so many indefensible positions. Persons of lax temperament will gain by such a prohibition. For that temperament, given an inch, will take a mile and will gradually eviscerate the moral law of all meaning. Is not, then, the true course for a director to be taken with a view to the temperament of the individual?¹

A summary of Figgis's views on probabilism is certainly not crucial to an appreciation of his contribution to the religious thought of his period, or even to his "Plea for Otherworldliness" in relation to his ethical position, but it is interesting and worthy of note as representing the most satisfactory part of his partially completed and often referred to work on Bossuet.

Figgis was a man of broad culture who recognized before many others that not only ethics but culture as well soon disintegrates in all its finer aspects apart from an "otherworldly" orientation and inspiration.²

Culture in every form is high and noble, but only if it points beyond. For it turns either to a selfish and fastidious cynicism, or to a despairing emptiness, unless earthly beauty and poetic passion are seen as the symbols of the "altogether lovely."It is God we are seeking for; the other world, which alone can give reality to this, alone can invest duty with enduring meaning, can find for beneficence a certain value, for knowledge an ordered place, and flash upon the shows of earthly beauty some

1. Ibid.

2. Figgis's conviction that Christianity and culture go hand in hand can be related in no small part to the impression Mandell Creighton made upon him at an important turning point in Figgis's life while still studying at Cambridge. "Never shall I forget the impression made on me as an undergraduate by being brought into touch with a great scholar who was above all things a humanist, but the very depth of whose humanism was due to his Christianity." Figgis, Hopes for English Religion, pp. 133-134.

hint at least of the eternal loveliness.¹

A civilisation cut off wholly from God would be a civilisation without the highest kind of culture, whether aesthetic or intellectual. It would have no motive beyond fear, immediate pleasure, and the desire to ward off the terrors of pain or death to pursue these ends. If indeed there be eternal life, and man can share it, then indeed the goods of sight and imagination, the treasures of thought, and all the ardours of spiritual adventure are the outward and visible signs of that inward and invisible grace which we term the glory of God.²

The higher goods even of human culture will not persist apart from a spiritual ideal; they will cease to be thought of as goods, and their value will decay.³

Figgis documented his claim by pointing to the historical evidence of the church's intimate link with the major cultural achievements of the Christian era. Pointing specifically to the thirteenth century, he writes:

There we find the highwater mark of achievement in the greatest Gothic, like the Sainte Chapelle and all the subsidiaries. Poetry never surpassed the "Divina Commedia" of Dante; and the intellectual activity of the universities of those days put ours to shame, and it was not the possession merely of a class. Every part of life was claimed for God, but in writers like St. Thomas the intellect obtains its rights, and in spite of reverence for authority has rarely been freer. The revival of the spirit of humility and poverty in the friars went side by side with the development of a vast system of law founded on the Roman.....⁴

To those who would say that the intimate connection of Christianity and culture in the Thirteenth Century is ancient history and offers no guide for contemporary thinking, Figgis pointed to Prussian militarism as representing the kind of culture that can be expected from those who rule out supernatural considerations in favour of a purely humanist culture.

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1. Figgis, The Gospel and Human Needs, pp. 133-135.
 2. Figgis, Hopes for English Religion, p. 51.
 3. Ibid., p. 131.
 4. Ibid., p. 49.

His words about the Germans were indorsed and dramatized by virtue of the fact that they were written and spoken in 1917 as the First World War was reaching its conclusion.

Can we not look forward to an age of purely humanist culture, without any disturbing supernatural interest. Ever since the Renaissance we have been witnessing efforts to produce this condition. At last we have some glimpse of its naked beauty. The present "moral" of the Prussian people is the direct result of the marriage of European scepticism with State idolatry. The sometime friend and pupil of Voltaire, Frederick the Great, is the symbol of it all. What has gone on since then is merely the logical development of the philosophy of "sans-souci." People were shocked and surprised at the bonfire of Louvain, the murder of Captain Fryatt, the Belgian deportations. They may have done well to be shocked, but they are foolish to be surprised. Nobody who has read Busch's Memoirs of Bismarck ought to be surprised at anything that the Germans have done. That is the kind of culture for which all deniers of the supernatural are preparing the way....¹

Being a man to whom the gifts of civilization were very precious, Figgis despised the Puritan predilection for looking down on the world, for completely missing the sacramental idea of things. He took the Puritans to task whenever the opportunity offered itself. In an article on

"The Puritan Spirit" he wrote

Since pleasure may and often does lead into harm, let us (the Puritan says) do away with all pleasure. Let us, therefore, not use it at all. Carried out logically it leads to pessimism and suicide, for since life is full of temptations it were better not to live. ...instead of seeing in this world a "veiled glory," it beholds nothing but a "city of destruction," and so far from consecrating all the activities of life to God's service it prohibits many of them altogether, leaving to the individual the right to comfort, but not to culture, and tending to substitute a narrow and avaricious spirit for a genial delight in life.²

1. Ibid., pp. 130-131.

2. J. N. Figgis, "Persecution by the Puritans," being a reprint from the National Church of articles on I. "The Puritan Spirit" by Rev. J. N. Figgis; II. "Persecution by Puritans" by the Rev. H. J. Clayton, (London, 1908), p. 25.

To those who might be blinded to the faults of Puritanism by the genius of Milton, Figgis said that Milton "was not a natural product of the Puritan spirit, but a magnificent mistake."

As has been seen, Figgis's words leave no doubt as to his conviction that it would be impossible to preserve a taste for and a power to create the best in culture apart from a focus on that "light whose smile kindles the universe, that benediction in which all things move." Equally strong in his assertion that the church needs to be intimately involved in culture, not only for the sake of redeeming and perpetuating good culture, but for the church's sake as well, for the sake of its making contact with a world crying out for religion but uninterested in "a religious world with its ecclesiastical gossips, its clerical cliques, its great preachers, and its paraphernalia of fuss..."¹

If, however, religion be the foundation of enduring culture, culture is no less needful to the Catholic Church. The final truth may not be with intellectualism; we are not on that ground to despise the intellect, but rather to develop and direct it. Art, if followed on lines of pure naturalism, will lose its dignity and sweetness. We are not on that ground to turn aside in Puritan contempt, but rather to do all we can to elevate artistic motives. So with all human instincts--none of them but may lead astray if pursued apart from God. But none of them but enriches the Christian if done in the right spirit. On all hands we see the problem between a spiritual and a non-spiritual culture. The solution is not to be looked for in any form of Puritanism--a movement confined to no one epoch and no one branch of the Church--but always seductive to austere minds; and always heretical.

If we think to convert the modern world by retiring into a coterie, we shall make a grievous error. Whatever the man of the present day accepts, it will not be Puritanism.²

Figgis had no patience with fellow churchmen who indulged in what he called "The Olympian Attitude":

By this I mean that state of mind which, serene in the admiration

1. Figgis, Hopes for English Religion, p. 133.

2. Ibid., pp. 132-133.

of its own opinions, is unwilling to entertain the thought that to many persons these opinions are unnecessary. The cardinal instance of this is to be found among our academic theologians. Interested in critical problems, they seem to take for granted the postulates which are denied. The fault is the monopoly of no one school of thought. Its origin lies not so much in opinion as in the increasing specialism of scholarship. In the old days everyone was familiar with literature, whatever might be his special line of study. Now for the most part that has changed. ... We have to live in the world of today. One of our chief tasks is to try to convert that world. To do that we must take some interest in its doings.... Possibly the omission of one or two Teutonic writers from the shelves of our critical scholars might be compensated by the purchase of a few volumes by Messrs. Wells, Shaw, Galsworthy, and the like.it is of the ideals and presuppositions of modern novelists and poets that we need be aware. The Olympian Attitude of mere contempt will result only in the alienation from the church of numbers of men and women in all classes, especially the youth of both sexes.¹

As can be readily seen here and all through his writings, Figgis had broad cultural and literary interests. He was an avid reader of contemporary poetry and interested in the poetry of every age. F. J. E. Raby says of Figgis that "the charm was all in the speaking voice heard at best when, from the pulpit, he was disclaiming Matthew Arnold, Francis Thompson, or with real abandon, Swindburn."²

The Community of the Resurrection Library refers to two items which, if they could be found, would shed much light on Figgis's literary interests. They are: "Manuscript Notes for Lectures on Poetry" and "Syllabus on Victorian Poets--A Lecture."

Although Figgis's cultural interests were many and varied, he favoured for himself the cultural pursuit which he defined as "that love

1. J. N. Figgis, "The Olympian Attitude," English Church Review, VII, (January 1916), pp. 36-37.

2. F. J. E. Raby, Theology, XL, #239, (May 1940), p. 331.

of intimacy with human life in every age which we call the historical sense...."¹

...I confess that I find it hard to respect the man who can regard as waste of time the inquiry into the causes which have produced this varied, brilliant civilisation that we see around us; who can see no use in tracing the gradual progress from the ancient to the modern world; to whom no attractions are presented by the study of the formative influences exercised for all time by Hellenic culture and Roman government; to whom no lessons are conveyed by the collision of that civilisation so brilliant and so weary with the vigour and wild life of the barbarian races; who looks, without the hope of learning aught, at that strange picture of the Middle Age so rich in colour, in fantasy, in childlike charm, and withal so brutal and unthinking; who does not long to view with living eyes the breaking up of that world by the forces of developing life, and the loosing of the bonds of centuries by the conquering intellectual instinct; to take part, if but for an hour, in that mad Renaissance carnival when the draught of art and literature that poured in with the treasures of Greece had so intoxicated the minds of men, that all law, all morality, all humanity, seemed for a time to have sunk submerged in the waves of a culture which threatened to be at once the culmination and the close of the world's life; who vacantly gazes upon the slow recovery of society from the shock, and its gradual assimilation of the new food; who contemplates without one stimulating thought the Reformation and the Revolution giving birth to this modern world of ours, a larger and richer life, with all its faults more complex, varied, fruitful, eager, than any which the earth has seen before; the man who can look upon all this unmoved, and superciliously describe the study of it as a waste of time, would appear to me to be singularly lacking in imagination, and characterised by a woe-ful narrowness of intellectual vision.²

In Chapters II and III of this paper, Figgis's main historical works were dealt with in considerable detail, the historical works which provided the context for much of his political thought. But these works do not represent all of Figgis's historical interests and writings. One

1. Figgis, Hopes for English Religion, p. 44.

2. J. N. Figgis, "The Value of Historical Study"—A Lecture—Delivered before the Kettering Branch of the National Union of Teachers, (January 31, 1895),

important article of an essentially non-religious and only partially political nature, "The Value of Historical Study"—A Lecture, has been referred to immediately above as well as earlier in this paper.¹ A work not previously referred to is: English History from Original Sources (1660-1715), Black's Historical Series, by J. Neville Figgis, 1902, Adam and Charles Black. This book was one of a series of histories for schools which were composed of liberal extracts from original authorities in the hope of increasing the interest of young students in the study of history. "The Cambridge Review" said of Figgis's volume:

In the volume before us, Mr. Figgis has played his part excellently. He has selected much that is entertaining without anything that would be indecent from the historical literature of the Restoration. Burnett, Pepys, Temple, and Carleton are judiciously interspersed with extracts from the verse of the period, from Marvell and Denham, Addison and the Jacobite songs. It will be a relief to most school boys who have heard so much of him, and been allowed to understand so little, at last to see with their own eyes what Dr. Sacheverell's sermon was like.²

The editors chose well in asking Figgis to write this little book, not only because of his liking for and intimate acquaintance with late Seventeenth and early Eighteenth Century England, but also because he had an aversion for secondhand judgments on any subject or age, requiring of himself a labourious study of original sources before presuming to formulate an opinion.³ He had learned his lesson well at the feet of Maitland

1. Supra, p. 152.

2. "A Review of English History from Original Sources, 1660-1715," Cambridge Review, (Thursday, May 7, 1903), p. 283.

3. It is interesting, if not amusing, to read a lecture which Figgis gave at Glasgow University on February 3, 1914, and which appeared in the Glasgow Herald for February 4, on page 10. It shows Figgis's refusal to accept judgments of authorities on historical personages without making his own investigation. The lecture was entitled, "The Super Governess

and Creighton, whom Figgis looked upon as masters at the art of reproducing the atmosphere of the times that were the objects of their study. Creighton is especially credited with having performed a much needed service for the study of history at Cambridge by teaching sound historical methods, the science of historical criticism, and by laying great stress on the study of original authorities.¹ His influence came to full flower about the time (the late eighteen-eighties) that Figgis turned to the serious study of history.

The fact that Figgis was generally recognized as a competent historian is further indicated by his having served as assistant editor of the 'Cambridge Modern History' from 1900-1901, by his having been asked by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge to write the articles on "Wycliffe" and "Warburton" in the series published by them entitled, Typical English Churchmen, and also by having been invited to make a number of contributions to A Dictionary of English Church History (edited by S. L. Ollard, M. A.; assisted by Gordon Cross, M. A.; London, A. R. Mowbray And Co., Ltd., 1912). Figgis's contribution to this latter volume include articles on "Arminianism," "John Henry Newman," "William

and the Super Snob," and in it he asserted that S. Simon, the author of the celebrated "Memoires," was the "super snob" who was bitterly prejudiced in his estimate of Mme de Marntenon, the "super governess," the mentor and wife of Louis XIV. Figgis defended her as having stood for gentleness and moderation and as resenting the Chauvenistic policy of Louis. Figgis took great delight in discovering and disputing what he considered to be ill-founded historical judgments. It has been noted also that he realized the difficulty of and the dangers inherent in changing the commonly accepted judgment regarding any historical person or event. Supra., pp. 180-181.

1. See The Cambridge Review, January 24, 1901, page 132, "Professor Creighton's Work in Cambridge" by W. M. Gwatkin.

of Ockham" and "Puritanism," "Calvinism," "Erastianism," and "Toleration."

In the little volume, Christianity and History, while trying, by and large, to avoid an expression of his own Christian philosophy of history that would turn the non-Christian away from a consideration of what he is trying to say, Figgis strives to show the importance for an understanding of the Christian era of a keen appreciation of the influence upon history of Christianity's Founder and the institutions giving expression to the Christian faith.

Such are, it seems, to the writer, some of the reflections which in those who seek to master the meaning of historical study, the phenomenon of Christianity is bound to excite. Firstly it demands attention, it cannot be ignored. Secondly it shews us the futility of treating human life in water-tight compartments, or in trying to separate arbitrarily, sacred and secular history. Thirdly, it shews us how, for a long period at least, Christianity was inwoven with the politics, the art, and the thinking of the civilised world, so that without some knowledge of, and even sympathy with this many sided institution, culture, as modern Europe understands it, is impossible. Fourthly, it demonstrates, as nothing else does, the unity of past and present, and shews that, however convenient for temporary purposes may be the hard-and-fast divisions of history they are merely relative and inadequate; above all, it shews the error of judging the whole of human life by a part. On the other hand Christianity is the most impressive of all the social institutions which teach us the fallaciousness of the mechanical view of human life; for again and again in the life both of its founder and its greatest exponents it brings out the importance of personality as a factor in history, and the futility of supposing all events to be the inevitable and unalterable result of the clash of impersonal forces. In this sense--apart from any question of the truth and merits of its theology--Christianity, as a fact, enforces, though it does not demonstrate, the spiritual view of human life, which allows us to say,

I think we are not wholly brain
Not merely cunning casts in clay
Magnetic mockeries--not in vain
Like Paul with beasts I fought with death.

This fact and not any special pre-dilection in favour of a particular political theory is at the basis of the claim, that Christianity has done more than any other influence to bring about freedom be-

cause it recognises, and by recognising enhances the dignity and worth of human nature. Finally, its history guards us against the danger inherent in mankind of paying too much regard to machinery and too little to ideas, of mistaking the temporary applications of truth for its eternal reality. On these grounds, it may fairly claim, that those who desire to attain the historical mind, those who are disinterestedly endeavouring to seek from history its answer to the question what is the best that has been known and thought in the world are (so far as their historical studies are concerned), free to adopt any attitude they please to the system of Christian doctrine or the forms of the Christian organization, but that only at the risk of losing that which they seek, and of acquiring notions false to the whole truth of human life or viewing out of perspective the panorama of human development, can they either ignore the fact of Christianity, or refrain from devoting to it a large, though never an exclusive, attention.¹

In his closing remarks in elaboration of his insistence that secular history cannot be studied in abstraction from Christianity, Figgis is the more bold to present his own Christian view of history. It shows him here, as in all of his major emphases considered in these pages under the heading of "Figgis as a Theologian," pleading a supernatural view as the only one which gives rise to true understanding and to hope.

Only in so far as we include in our survey the eternal mystery-play of the gospel and its appeal to the human heart, shall we gather hope instead of despair from the spectacle. Only so can we catch the glimpses of romance behind the sordid and squalid representation of greed and selfishness which is too often in the foreground of our picture; only so is it possible even in the spectacle of shipwrecked nations, and fleeting glories to discern the true dignity of man's destiny and the splendour of his undying aspirations, for only so through the twilight of social insincerities and individual iniquities shall there dawn for the patient watcher the vision and the wonder of the past.

The lesson of history to the patient seeker after truth, is when all is said, one and the same with the supreme message of the gospel. The picture of human life in the past tends to produce weariness and despair, except in so far as it be illuminated by Hope and

1. Figgis, Christianity and History, pp. 72-74.

transfigured by Love.¹

It is an easy transition in the final stages of the study of "Figgis As a Theologian" from a consideration of his views on history to a consideration of his thoughts on the church. Just how natural this transition is is suggested by these words:

A man who takes part in a high celebration of the Eucharist is a witness and a sharer in the unity of history. In this worship he is carried far back through many ages, breathing climates older than the Christian, and he, a modern, is at one with primitive man and also has the promise of the future. It is then, as gathering in itself the religious experience of mankind, that the Christian Church makes its appeal....²

Figgis's conception of the church was typically "high Anglican," including a high doctrine of the sacraments, an insistence that the Bible cannot be studied in abstraction from the life of the society which produced it, and a doctrine of authority, which, considerably under the influence of Newman's writings, steers a middle course between the false ultramontaniam of Rome and what Figgis felt to be the excessive individualism of Protestant groups, replete with the dangers of self-dependent piety.

Considerable space has already been given to Figgis's assertion that real authority "exists diffusively in the whole 'communitas fidelium'" as opposed to any polity which concentrates authority in one or several individuals or in the clergy to the exclusion of the laity, and to his conviction that the Anglican church's relation as a national church to the rest of Christendom justifies the claim of the English church to an

1. *Ibid.*, pp. 75-76.

2. Figgis, Civilisation at the Cross Roads, p. 213.

undeniable place in the stream of the church's Catholicity.¹ In this latter thought he indicated by emphasis a preference for basing the Catholicity of the English church on a federalistic social principle rather than on the traditional view of Apostolic succession.

Although Figgis was critical of much of Protestantism for an inadequate theology of the church, for weak principles of authority, and for a tendency to require of its adherents certain feelings of which all men are not capable, he nevertheless took frequent occasion to say that the Evangelical spirit had much to contribute to Catholic Christianity.

If, as we hold, Evangelicals have much to learn from the greater fulness of the Catholic life and its insistence on the social and sacramental aspects of religious experience, we need not deny that many who glory in the name of Catholic have little less to learn from the real faith in the Cross and personal devotion to our Lord of the true Evangelical. Perhaps there is no more soul-destroying superstition than the dilettante Catholicism to which religion is no more than ritual;²

As may be seen from the above, Figgis, for all of his loyalty to the Church of England in general and to its High Church School in particular, was still one of the Anglican Church's severest critics.³ He felt that for the most part his church was insensitive to the continuing growth of forces hostile to the church and the beliefs and values for which she stands.

If you take the atmosphere of a provincial cathedral close, or of most rural deaneries in country districts, it may be doubted

1. *Supra*, p. 132-134.

2. *Figgis, The Fellowship of the Mystery*, "John Henry Newman," p. 254.

3. For an appreciation of Figgis's conviction that his church was blind to the plight of the poor, *supra.*, p. 202-204.

whether its tone of complacent optimism would think that there was anything worthy of serious thought in modern infidelity. Unbelief in such a view is a sort of freak, a fad--like wearing sandals--so far as practical work goes, a phenomenon so rare as to be negligible. Even among those who ought to know better, problems of Church policy and even of faith are often treated as though it were all a sort of squabble in the family, and there were no Goths thundering at the gates.¹

He was never more critical of his church than in a series of sermons preached in 1916 at Grosvenor Chapel, Mayfair, and published under the title of Some Defects in English Religion. The titles of the first four sermons are: "Sentimentalism," "Legalism," "Cowardice," and "Complacency." In the last of these, certain scathing remarks appear, some of which became famous and are still remembered among Figgis's associates, and some of which give rise to the accusation by his reviewers of his being rather theatrical in his criticism.

The Church of England has become more and more a society of respectable people. Its standards are those of good form, though it likes to dress its windows with the bones of martyrs. But as I said three weeks ago, the last thing you will say of it is that it is a society of penitent sinners.²

One super-eminent quality of English religion is its dislike of the heights and depths. It cannot understand either saints or sinners. If S. Francis of Assisi were to appear to-day he would be locked up, and S. Mary Magdalene would be turned out of the Girls' Friendly Society.³

...there are many churches which seem to have sunk down into a sort of religion which was described once as "auntism," a religion suited for people who gave up all hopes of matrimony in the 'seventies and 'eighties.⁴

But Figgis only censured the church because he loved it and be-

1. Ibid., pp. 250-251.

2. Figgis, Some Defects in English Religion, p. 42.

3. Ibid., p. 45.

4. Ibid., p. 47.

cause he believed so strongly that the "Plea for Otherworldliness," which has here been described as constituting Figgis's main theological emphasis and contribution, could be heard and the challenge met only within the context of the life of the church, the otherworldly society, The Fellowship of the Mystery, the latter being the title of Figgis's Bishop Paddock Lectures on the Church, delivered at the General Theological Seminary in New York, during Lent, 1913.

In these lectures, as elsewhere, Figgis lays stress on what he called "the democracy" of the Catholic church, by which he meant that Catholic worship with its stress on the Eucharist has a universal appeal, circumventing what he saw to be the danger among certain individuals and groups of a kind of exclusiveness which predicates a knowledge of and communion with God on the enjoyment of a certain kind of temperament or feeling or emotion, the history of a conversion experience, the possession of certain intellectual insights, or the capacity for mystical experience.

The Gospel is as universal as life, and no less mysterious. The worst criminal can find his Saviour in the Cross; and the most highly educated man or woman has not exhausted the meaning of the words, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life."¹

...it is in the matter of worship that the universal character of the Catholic religion is most strikingly vindicated.²

With the sacramental view of religion, the layman comes into his own;..... The coster in the East End can enter into the highest act of Christian worship and receive its crowning grace; provided his will be right, it matters no whit whether he feels

1. Figgis, The Fellowship of the Mystery, p. 167.

2. Ibid., p. 168.

3. Ibid., p. 169.

much or little.¹

More and more as I muse upon it, more and more as the wonder and beauty of the Catholic experience of all ages come into my soul, do I feel that the more rich and strange is the experience that may be ours, and the sense of praise and worship and of God's Presence given to us in our Eucharistic worship; and more and more am I convinced that for the majority of men and women, not, perhaps, capable through time or temperament of high speculation or of any great powers of religious rapture, the system of external ordinances and of Sacramental means is the one truly democratic system in religion which gives them each and all their place and their rights independent of their temperament, their education, and, if I may say so, of their character.²

In concluding this chapter, perhaps it would be valuable, by way of summary and by way of emphasizing the important role that the church played in Figgis's thinking, to document, however briefly, Figgis's conviction that each of his major "otherworldly" emphases would live and thrive only as they were inspired and nourished by the life of the church.

Reflecting his conviction that civilization is doomed apart from a renewed allegiance to the supernaturally inspired values for which the church stands, he says:

A civilisation to endure will have to mean something, and "projected efficiency" will not satisfy any race which considers its latter end. Against this dissolution which is otherwise in store for us, there is nothing to stand but the life of the Christian Church.³

...the world, as it now is, bears on the face of it the marks which call for redemption; ... Christianity comes to us alone professing to have this power from beyond, and alone able to meet the universal need of deliverance. If the civilised world, saved by a remnant of faithful, accepts this evangel, it may rise to heights undreamed of. If, as many indications suggest,

1. *Ibid.*, p. 169.

2. Figgis, *Hopes for English Religion*, pp. 41-42.

3. Figgis, *Civilisation at the Cross Roads*, p. 62.

the world at large rejects it, then civilisation may proceed on its course of God-denial for some generations or even centuries, but it is doomed like the ancient world; for no culture can go on existing without faith, and the forces of materialism already looming as a cloud will gather volume, until the land of the spirit is overshadowed.¹

Striving to make clear his conviction that the task of modern theology to declare the uniqueness, the distinctiveness of the Christian faith, while at the same time recognizing the problems raised by modern thought, must be done within the framework of loyalty to the living spirit of the church he writes:

...when we are invited, on the strength of certain dubious theories, to repudiate that experience (the 2,000 year history of the church) and to try an entirely fresh start, we reply first, that this is impossible, and secondly, that such a proceeding, if not impossible, would be blasphemy--a denial of God's Providence, and of the whole meaning of a historical religion. Are we to believe that, though the gates of hell are not to prevail against the Church, yet its whole scheme, alike of thought and practice, of worship and sacrament, the doctrines of the Incarnation and the Atonement, are to go for nothing, while still we are to call ourselves Christians? Such a view of history would need absolute demonstration before a wise man could accept it; and, so far from its being demonstrated, the contrary can be seen to be very probable.²

In his stress on the importance of religious experience and the necessity of approaching and interpreting the details of the Christian life and story against the whole background of this essentially supernatural experience, Figgis, as seen from the above quotation as well, placed great emphasis on the Christian church "as at the centre of the religious experience of the human race."³ He insisted upon the necessity

1. Ibid., pp. 11-12.

2. Figgis, The Fellowship of the Mystery, p. 75.

3. Ibid., p. 56.

of the individual's religious experience being thought of as a part of and subject to the scrutiny of the church's great living tradition of "otherworldly" experience, an experience not confined to nor adequately comprehended in rational categories, an experience essentially mysterious in nature. Describing Newman's views on these related thoughts, Figgis succeeded in summarizing his own views as well:

He saw that individualist religion would soon become merely a subjective sentiment; that a strong, collective authority was needed, instinct with the Holy Spirit imparted at Pentecost. He felt that Christianity, as being a life, not a theory, was a distinct thing, and must be judged as a whole, not by the meticulous criticism of details. He discerned that the real problem concerns the total nature of that religious fact (or experience) which stretches from the priest at the Eucharist (for we must begin there) back through the Church to the New Testament experience.¹

Regarding Figgis' stress on the miraculous element in Christianity and his conviction that miracles are the most typical expression of the nature of the Christian experience, he said that the very survival through the ages against tremendous odds of an institution whose life is predicated on the validity of certain significant miraculous events presents a strong case in favour of accepting these miracles as factual.

The uniformity of nature would be violated by such facts as Our Lord's Birth and Resurrection, only on these conditions; either that these were mere freak events without any adequate cause, or that they had produced no corresponding results. Precisely the contrary is the case. That is why the existence of the Christian Church must ever play a large part in the argument.²

As for Figgis's Christology and his insistence that both the Docetism which robs Christ of His true humanity and the Modernism which

1. Ibid., "John Henry Newman," pp. 260-261.

2. Ibid., "Modernism versus Modernity," pp. 277-278.

robs Christ of His true divinity are in error, he points yet again to the church as the only source of an understanding of the Person of Jesus Christ which is according to the truth.

Our Lord may speak to the soul alone, it is true; but we cannot proceed to identify His voice with that of Jesus Christ without the use of historical knowledge, and that will be found to imply the Church.

Whatever our religion is to mean to us after we have it, we cannot gain even a minimum acquaintance with Jesus except through the institutions that issued from His life, Since He no longer walks the earth, all knowledge of His historical life can come to us only through institutions which express His spirit,¹

...we are driven, however reluctantly, to approach our Lord Jesus Christ through those social institutions of which His life was the originating principle.²

The church, the supernatural society, also plays an ever important role in providing the necessary supernatural, "otherworldly" orientation for high ethical values and a keen social conscience.

All high ideals ultimately have their sanction in the Christian Church, and without that support will soon decay; ...³

And finally, as part of his assertion that religious or supernatural values are the sanction and inspiration of all manner of cultural achievements, Figgis, having documented the historical role of the church in cultural progress, points to the church as continuing to be the most important patron of cultural achievement.

Our hopes for the Catholic religion at this stage rest upon our faith in its power to stimulate every living and wholesome interest of human life and society. We claim that in the Christian Church each man in the degree and measure of his capacity can

1. Figgis, The Fellowship of the Mystery, pp. 43-44.

2. Ibid., p. 45.

3. Figgis, Hopes for English Religion, p. 24.

have not less but more of the love of beauty, as shown in art, letters, and music, or the sense of order and the desire for truth in the investigation of natural phenomena, or that love of intimacy with human life in every age which we call the historical sense, no less than he can in the growth of all bodily powers and courage, and the readiness for adventure, mental and physical.

In a word, Christianity is the sanction of Humanism in its best sense, and the Church is the true home of the soul and the body.¹

Words which appear at the end of the preface to Figgis's little book, Religion and English Society, provide an excellent summary of the special role which Figgis felt that the English Church was called upon to play in his time. They also constitute a fitting conclusion for these chapters on "Figgis as a Theologian."

...I do think that upon us (of the Church of England) is laid the burden, heavy, but still to be borne, of finding some synthesis between "the faith that was once delivered to the saints" and all that is of enduring worth in the modern world. In a different sense from that common, ours is indeed a "via media." The Church of Rome, on its official side, has adopted the policy of sitting on the safety-valve; while the modernists on the whole are guides rather stimulating than safe. "Liberal" Protestantism, as the more candid observers (like Professor Burkitt) are now admitting, is bankrupt. The older Evangelical view, unrivalled for its individual sincerity and its hold on the Cross has always suffered from a lack of the corporate vision, while it leaned for support on a view of the Bible which is daily becoming more untenable. There are indeed not wanting signs, that all those, who hold on the supernatural is real, are being drawn together. This "rapprochement," however, cannot mean the surrender of any one vital element in our Catholic heritage. A solemn duty is laid upon us of the English Church, for whom the sacramental gift and the Evangelical faith are alike integral parts of one living religion--the duty of bringing forth from the treasure-house of the Spirit things new and old.²

1. Ibid., p. 44.

2. Figgis, Religion and English Society, pp. vii-viii.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Figgis's "Plea for Otherworldliness" was made as a member of that Liberal wing of Anglo-Catholicism, whose scholars have continued in the best tradition of the Oxford Movement and who have stood on the side of learning, for the acceptance of Biblical criticism, and for the full use of art and knowledge in the service of faith. As has been seen, he singled out the expression, "Mediating liberalism" as best describing his own position within this general movement.

While holding fast to the "Eternal Gospel," there is before us in this age the task, not yet accomplished, of adjusting to a theology framed in another intellectual climate, a new view of the Bible, enlarged conceptions of history, and deeper knowledge of the natural world and of the mind of man. "Mediating liberalism" is perhaps the best term in which to describe the attitude of wisdom; for that implies a real reverence for the heritage that is ours, together with an alert openness to what is new. Do not, however, let us suppose there is no problem, or deny changes which are real.¹

Figgis was essentially in agreement with the authors of Lux Mundi, which book was published in 1890, while Figgis was still at Cambridge and just beginning to feel the full impact of Creighton's personality and Christian humanism on his own college-bred agnosticism. In identifying Figgis with this key group of "second generation Tractarians," it must be added that he was not completely of them, and that because of a number of distinctive emphases which have been singled out in the pages of this thesis.

1. Figgis, The Fellowship of the Mystery, pp. 96-97.

By his emphasis on a theology of Christian experience (Christianity is not a system but a life"), and his insistence that Christianity must be defended from the whole experience of it and that "we are dealing not with a number of isolated events apparently marvellous, each to be discussed 'in vacuo,' but with the great experience of human life extending from the converted sinner of today right back to 'that strange man upon the Cross' and all that He implies,"¹ Figgis distinguished himself in general from the "Lux Mundi" school where the argument from experience is only occasionally used to reinforce other arguments and where it is generally supposed that the facts of history or the dogmatic system of Christianity are the grounds from which belief follows.

Figgis' strong emphasis in his Christology upon Christ's redemptive act provides another reason for not identifying Figgis completely with the "Lux Mundi" school; although it would be in error to say that Christ as a Redeemer did not play an important part in "Lux Mundi" thinking in general. E. G. Selwyn singles out this emphasis as a very significant part of Figgis's impact and total contribution.

The effect of Figgis' personality and preaching was to give a marked orientation to the thought of my generation in Cambridge. Its Evangelicalism, no less fervent than that of his contemporary, the Nonconformist divine, Dr. Forsyth, was bound up with an equally fervent hold upon sacraments; and he showed us a religion that was at once vital and critical, orthodox and up to date, Catholic and non-Roman, Anglican to the core. And men found themselves impelled to a fresh study of the Bible as the story of redemption, of the Eucharist as the showing-forth of the Cross,²

1. Figgis, Civilisation at the Cross Roads, p. 199.

2. E. G. Selwyn, "The Outlook for English Theology," Theology, XL, (January 1940), p. 7.

Figgis' strong insistence on the essentially mysterious nature of the Christian experience and his conviction that "you cannot search for religion mainly from the side of intellectual inquiry and arrive at a Christian result"¹ served to distinguish him from the Oxford men of the "Lux Mundi" movement wherein an element of idealism figured in their thinking. Such are some of the main considerations which give Figgis an identity of his own within the main stream of "Lux Mundi" thought.

The student's estimate of the past or continuing validity of the Liberal Catholic position will largely determine his estimate of the value of the study of "Figgis as a Theologian." If he believes, as does L. S. Thornton,* that Essays Catholic and Critical, published in 1926, constitutes the swan song of the Liberal Catholic movement, then he will feel that the study of Figgis is only important for a better appreciation of the history of a movement which has now outlived its usefulness and the contribution to that movement of a man, the general neglect of whose contribution (save for some recognition given in recent years in several religious journals and M. G. Tucker's little book, John Neville Figgis) leaves a gap in the account of recent English Church history. If, on the other hand, the student believes, as E. G. Selwyn seems to believe, that Liberal Catholicism continues to speak in a significant way to the religious needs of modern man, then he will point to Figgis as worthy of study because of his share in the early nurture of a still important emphasis. It is of no small interest to read Selwyn's reference to Figgis

1. Figgis, The Gospel and Human Needs, p. 33.

in his refutation in Theology for January, 1940, of articles appearing in immediately preceding issues of that journal by the Archbishop of York and Mr. Mascall, which claimed that a marked feature of the time is "a sense of divergence between older and younger theologians."

To these men who assumed that it is peculiar to the younger men to feel that the philosophical expression of Christianity is spiritually and emotionally unsatisfactory and who affirm that a distrust of Liberalism and a desire to return to dogma is peculiar to the young man's outlook, Selwyn has this to say:

For those of us who were at Cambridge during the decade before the last war, the "habit of security" to which the Archbishop alludes was already subject to some rude shocks. On the one hand, agnosticism was militant, and no freshman could be in the University for a week without being aware of it: if he came from a Christian home and school, he would soon have to give an answer for his faith. On the other hand, there came into this academic world a vigorous counter-challenge in the person and from the lips of Neville Figgis. The "bon caseur" from Marnhull had now become the monk from Mirfield; and he added to an unquestioned reputation as an historian and man of learning the spiritual power of a newly re-converted life. He came with the message of the Cross in his life and on his lips, and he electrified us. In his Hulsean Lectures of 1908-1909 he confronted us with the whole issue between faith and un-faith, insisted that it was moral no less than intellectual, and showed that the foundations on which Western Society had been built were already deeply undermined. And his recall to the Cross as the true way of life no less than the true centre of thought filled the University church to overflowing on every Sunday that he preached.¹

Whatever one's views about Liberal Catholicism, the very least that can be said in Figgis's behalf is that his writings performed an important service in challenging the mechanistic assumptions and unhistorical approaches of the turn of the century movement in Roman Catholic

1. Selwyn, "The Outlook for English Theology," pp. 6-7.

circles known as Modernism and labelled in Protestant circles as the New Theology. The fact that he was ready to recognize in these movements whatever legitimate insights they enjoyed (such as Modernism's instinct for approaching the subject of religion from "the whole"), the fact that he did not minimize the problems which they raised, served to add a note of sincerity and authority to his impassioned denunciation of what he rightly saw to be certain unwarranted mechanistic assumptions about the nature of the universe made by Modernist and New Theologian, assumptions which he said involved as much an act of faith as to the nature of the universe as does the spiritual view of the universe which looks upon miracles as an expression of God's freedom in a spiritually ordered world.

It has been noted in the preceding pages that Figgis's wealth of historical information and his knowledge of historical procedures played a part in most all of his finer theological insights. His experience as a historian not only gave him an audience among historical circles and a following among students of history which he might not otherwise have had, but also equipped him to expose the fallacies inherent in the willingness to accept without question the radical criticism of the New Testament. The fact that for the most part the issues raised by the Modernists and the New Theologians are no longer the crucial issues, their weaknesses having been exposed, takes nothing away from the reputation of a man who shared significantly in the reduction of these issues to something less than a continuing serious threat to orthodox beliefs. Neither does the fact that Figgis's conservatism would not be con-

sidered very conservative as compared with more recent theological trends on the Continent and in Great Britain take away from the fact that he served his period nobly in challenging the extreme Liberalism of his own day.

It is not to be supposed, however, out of an effort to establish the thesis that The Contribution of John Neville Figgis (1866-1919) to the Religious Thought of His Period was a significant one, that his was the one voice to make "A Plea for Otherworldliness" in the face of strong forces which thought that the only way to preserve religion in a modern, scientific age was to minimize its supernatural aspects. Simply to mention the names of Frederick von Hugel, who although best described as a Modernist yet insisted on the necessity of belief in the transcendence of God, and P. T. Forsyth, the brilliant Nonconformist divine, and Will Spens, one of an appreciable number within his own High Anglican family whose views were more like than unlike Figgis's views, is to substantiate the fact that Figgis was not alone in his stand against the idols of both the study and the market place. On the other hand, not to recognize Figgis's voice as one strong voice among several (and yet with its own distinctive quality) which sounded a battle cry against these idols is to do injustice to the man and to expose an unwarranted omission in one's knowledge of the history of religious thought and English church life during the first twenty years of this century.

Whereas many of Figgis's co-religionists would agree that in regard to religious thought in general Figgis said what they were trying to say, only in a more interesting and convincing way, they would be

equally quick to agree in regard to the idea of the group personality in the nature of the church that Figgis not only expressed the idea better but made it a more central conviction in the minds of his fellows. This is no small part of the reason why so many pages of this thesis are given over to an effort to understand the nature and progress of Figgis's political and social theories. They form an indispensable background to an understanding of Figgis's views on the nature of authority in the "Fellowship of the Mystery" and of his belief that the Church of England, representing the best realization of the ideals of the Council of Constance, enjoys a most authentic place in the tradition and ongoing life of the Catholic church.

An insight into Figgis's progress away from Austinian "single society" thinking and his growth in "Genossenschaftsrecht," "group personality," "two society," "communitas communitatum" thinking has also been a necessary prerequisite to an understanding of Figgis's contribution to thought regarding the relations between church and state and the larger problem of the relation of the state to all the social units (group personalities) within the state, of which the church-state problem is an aspect. For whatever issue might be taken with that development of Figgis's thought which says that a Christian should not make a decision on Christian grounds which will affect non-Christian citizens; yet the fact remains that Figgis's efforts to champion the "inherent rights" of the real "group personality," whether civil or ecclesiastic, has had considerable effect and vogue over a period of many years. In this paper men as different from one another as Gore, Forsyth, and Laski were seen

to have been duly influenced by Figgis's thought.

Yet again, Figgis's political thought, as studied within the context of his political-historical works, has been important to an appreciation of the background which prepared him to be such an astute critic of modern civilization. Not a few of those who think that something of what Figgis had to say is still important look upon him as a prophet, and that because of his tragic sense, developed well before 1914, of a world rushing towards catastrophe. F. J. E. Raby wrote of Figgis in 1940 just as the civilized world was stepping up the pace of the second global conflict of the century,

My chief aim in compiling this summary of the main ideas which guided the thought of J. N. Figgis is to show the prophetic accuracy with which he read the signs of the times and disentangled from the confusion of the contemporary world just those issues which were to face the following generation.¹

No appreciation of "Figgis as a Political Thinker" or of "Figgis as a Theologian" is complete without an appreciation of "Figgis as an Man." These words appeared following Figgis's death in the Cambridge Review for May 9, 1919:

But by his many friends Figgis will be remembered not so much as a historian or divine but as a delightful human being who was delightful because he was so human. With a genius for friendship he knew how to receive as well as how to give affection: and not a little of his charm was derived from his interest in his fellow creatures. Ever ready to sympathize with, and, if possible, to understand alien points of view, he could be annoyed but never shocked; and life for him never ceased to be an adventure, sometimes happy and sometimes unhappy but never uninteresting. he had friends and admirers in many different sections of Cambridge society. Agnostics

1. Raby, "John Neville Figgis, Prophet," p. 331.

forgave him for being a clergyman, evangelicals forgot that he was like a monk, and undergraduates overlooked the fact that he was no longer young.¹

Because he had known and was perhaps never completely free from the chill of the agnostic temper ("To others faith is the bright serenity of unclouded vision; to me it is the angel of an agony, the boon of daily and hourly conflict."),² he could sound his "Plea for Otherworldliness" with a keen sensitivity to those in his listening or reading audience who found it difficult to believe. E. K. Talbot says:

Certainly it was his own experience which was blood under the skin of all his religious writing--and which gave it such animation and even exhilaration.³

There was a seal on the voice which came from Figgis's corpulent, clumsily built figure as he preached from the pulpit of Great Saint Mary's, Cambridge, in 1908, and from that pulpit and many others until his death, because of his dramatic act of self-abandonment in giving up his rich living in Marnhull for the comparative hardships of the life of a monk at Mirfield.

Not a few of Figgis's contemporaries had a very high estimate of his contribution to the religious thought of his period:

It is hardly exaggerating to call (Fr. Figgis) the most powerful, intellectual influence in the English church at the present day.⁴

The Rev. J. N. Figgis...is one of the keenest apologists of our day.⁵

1. Cambridge Review, (May 9, 1919), pp. 295-296.

2. Figgis, The Gospel and Human Needs, p. 15.

3. Keble Talbot, The Quarterly Chronicle of the Community of the Resurrection, (Christmas, 1940),

4. R. A. Knox, "Enfant Terrible--A Review of Some Loose Stones," Church Times, (November 14, 1913), p. 683.

5. Expository Times, XXVI, #4, (January, 1915), p. 162.

Although these claims have a strong element of truth in them, yet it must be said again that Figgis's impact on his period can never be calculated apart from a consideration of the personal impact of the man. His odd physical appearance, his childhood spent in an Evangelical home, his brilliant mind, his many years spent at Cambridge although possessing a temperament which might have been more at home at Oxford, his stormy spiritual history, and his little winning though odd mannerisms all combine to present the picture of a most interesting person whose contribution to religious thought bears the distinct stamp of his unusual combination of qualities.

This writer visited and enjoyed the kind hospitality of the Community of the Resurrection for several weeks during the Winter of 1949, in an effort to search out information about Figgis from the men in the Community and from the Community library. Father B. Horner, C. R., who was a member of the Community when Figgis was living, in response to the question, "How would Neville Figgis react to being shown a paper about him, written by a young theological student?" replied, "He would read it eagerly and say, 'My word, this is very interesting. And at the end, I discovered you were talking about me.'" It is hoped that Neville Figgis would indeed recognize well before the last leaf that these pages, written under the heading of "The Contribution of John Neville Figgis (1866-1919) to the Religious Thought of His Period, are an effort to appreciate the background, the content, and the personal flavour of the writing, preaching, and teaching of a man whose thought, especially during the last decade and more of his life, constituted a distinct contribution to the religious thought of his time.

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